

HISTORY
OF THE
BRITISH CONQUESTS
IN
INDIA.

BY
HORACE ST. JOHN.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

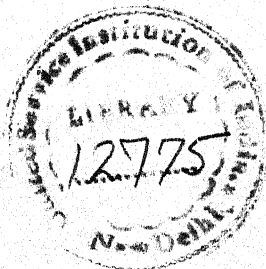
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Vol II

BRITISH CONQUESTS IN INDIA.

"The Commission of the Company began in Commerce, and ended in Empire."—BURKE.

CHAPTER I.

POLITICAL SYSTEM OF INDIA.

THE English in India were, at the commencement of the nineteenth century, related to three sets of princes. The Nawab of the Carnatic, and the Rajah of Tanjore, with others, had abdicated their civil as well as their military functions, and were simple pensioners of state. The Nawab of Oude held a considerable territory, within which his authority was supreme. His armed

forces could only be exercised in repressing the people, for the defence of his country had been undertaken by the British Government. This division of power was more easy in India than it would have been in any European kingdom, for there the rule of the soldier is distinct from that of the statesman. When, therefore, the right of peace or war was taken away, the privileges of the civil governor might remain, in all their original completeness.¹

The third set of princes were those who still enjoyed independence. In relation to them the English stood, not as threatening invaders, but as legitimate rivals. Both were strangers to the soil. There was not a native power in India. One had come from distant islands in search of commerce; one had sprung up amid wastes of rock and sand in quest of plunder. Chief among the unsubdued princes were those of the Marhatta confederation, with the Peishwa claiming to be their supreme ruler. They were, in fact, predatory adventurers who had assumed royal titles, without laying aside their original characteristics. In treating with them, therefore, a

¹ Mill : British India, vi., 371.

politician could only expect to prevent their hostility, by rendering them hopeless of the objects at which their ambition aimed. They confessedly desired to subjugate all India. In the consideration, accordingly, of the causes which produced the Mahratta war—one of the most portentous episodes in our Asiatic history—it is essential to keep in view the nature of the enemy with whom we came into collision.

The governments of Hyderabad and the Mysore were established under our guarantee and protection. We were, consequently, successors to all their local and political relations. The previous history of those countries had shown that scarcely a year passed without a conflict arising between them and the Mahrattas, from causes inherent in the system adopted by those predatory states.¹ Continually conquering, they never acquired a durable empire; for they perpetually changed their seats, and their very success, animating them to rash battles, broke up their power, and ended in their ruin. They had already subdued immense tracts of territory, and, following the natural bent of human nature,

¹ Malcolm : Political History.

seized new provinces wherever they could find them. But they had not the wisdom to govern well what the sword had well acquired. With the rude ambition, they combined the raw passions, of barbarians, and never ceased to make encroachment on their enemies, because against them it was pleasant; on their friends, because against them it was easy.

The Nizam and the Hindu Prince of Mysore were, therefore, in continual collision with this predatory confederation. From such struggles the English could not hope to be exempt, unless by abandoning all their acquisitions, leaving defenceless the princes they had undertaken to secure, who were no longer able to defend themselves, and breaking up their Eastern trade, or by disabling the Mahrattas from perpetually interrupting the tranquillity of India. Ruin and disgrace, political and commercial, absolute historical infamy, would have followed them, had they chosen the first of these alternatives. To leave affairs as they stood would have involved a constant expenditure of money sufficient to swallow up the revenues of a region far more wealthy than Hindustan; for our frontiers could only be secured by immense armies of observa-

tion permanently encamped upon them. It is true the Mahrattas were divided among themselves, but the experience of many events had shown that they were ready to unite when a prospect was opened of devastating the territories belonging to the English or to their allies, the only barrier between them and a universal monarchy in India.¹ Like the pirate chiefs of the Indian Archipelago, whom in many of their characteristics they resembled, they could forget their private feuds when a common object invited them to associate their arms. War under these circumstances was an irresistible conclusion. It was for the Governor-General to approach it with policy.

A statesman, consequently, who was faithful to his duty, and desired the permanent security of the dominions he ruled, which were to him a trust from the British people, could not neglect to engage the Mahrattas in the interest of peace. The authority of the Peishwa was so imperfect, that many of the chiefs nominally subject were really superior to him. They held lands under his grant by the tenure of military service; but their audacity impelled them to use him as the

¹ Duff: Mahratta History.

instrument of their ambition.¹ To these Oriental barons the seal of a supreme prince was only a patent without limit, to exercise their servile vassals in the subjugation of new territories for their enjoyment. The question arose, whether they or the English were to be paramount in India.²

The Governor-General under the irresistible pressure of circumstances had to choose between the imminent chance of ruin to the British Indian Empire, and an arrangement which would secure it against the Mahrattas. In all directions the sufficing reasons for this policy appeared; but especially in the acquired provinces, where tranquillity—the first they had enjoyed for ages—was already humanising the people, inducing them to become industrious, to lay aside arms, and to occupy their energies in building habitations for themselves, and cultivating the soil for their own support.

¹ Wilson: Notes to Mill, vi., 371.

² Capt. Thornton: Summary History, 136.

CHAPTER II.

NEGOTIATIONS WITH POONAH.

WHEN Tippoo Sultan was overthrown, and his kingdom divided, a considerable territory had been reserved to be offered to the Peishwa, on the condition that he would accede to an alliance for guaranteeing the peace of India. Under the advice of his powerful feudatories, he rejected the proposal, encouraged to assume this attitude by the presence of a strong French brigade at Poonah. It was, however, the policy of Lord Wellesley to persuade him into consent, to induce him to entrust the defence of his dominions to a body of the Company's troops, to be supported from the revenues of the ceded territory. The Governor-General enjoyed a peculiar

right to make this proposal, which, while it would secure the Poonah throne, interfered with none of the rights enjoyed by its feudatories, and could only be resisted by them because it defeated the plans of their rapacious ambition, which it is just to style unprincipled, because they themselves never pretended to be controlled by the decisions of equity. The Peishwa himself was not in the position of an honourable ally. He had been bound by faith to take a share in the war against Tippoo Sultan, and had not only failed to fulfil his part, but even corresponded with the enemy.¹ Any European state, guilty of this flagrant crime against the common law of nations, would be struck with disgrace off the roll of honourable powers.

Nor was this the only hostile act of the Peishwa. Documents discovered at Seringapatam involved him in the conspiracy of which the Viceroy of the Carnatic had been convicted. He had evidently only waited for an opportunity to join the Mysore King. This, while it would not have given the English a right to chastise him as a traitor, would have allowed them to re-

¹ Wellesley Despatches, in which this is clearly proved.

fuse him, without compromise, all share in the spoils of the war. As it was, when circumstances made it necessary to preclude the armed union of the Mahrattas against us, the Governor-General, while with one hand he proffered their monarch a treaty, held out with the other a splendid gift of empire. The hatred of the prince, or a vain hope of enjoying independence, induced him to refuse, though his only choice was to be debased by the coercion of his own chiefs, or ruled by the influence of a powerful and honourable ally.

It is said that he declined on account of the recent transactions with Oude, which were not settled, and could not have been known to him until a year and a half after.¹ Though, therefore, he could not be independent, and though the French were intriguing at his Court, the vacillating Peishwa rejected the only plan which would save him from utter and irredeemable degradation.

With that feebleness of purpose or want of candour characteristic rather of Asiatics in general, than of any individual in particular, he would not at once explicitly declare his resolution.

¹ Auber : British Power in India, ii., 275.

Long negotiations took place. He sported with the patience of his allies, desiring to show to the chiefs who threatened him that he was able, if willing, to secure English protection. All this, indeed, he had a right to do, and his disinclination to admit British troops within his dominions was no more than natural.¹ It was a perfectly fair game between him and the Governor-General. Had he confined himself to this, no cause for coercion would have existed; but he continually intrigued with the Nizam at Hyderabad, to induce him to break his faith and engage with the Mahrattas in an enterprise against the Company.² When the English discovered that he was determined upon war, policy would have suggested that the declaration should come first from them. There is sometimes a moral conviction of this kind, the sense of which history finds it difficult to transmit, and such appears to have existed at that period. Two kinds of evidence may prove the policy of actions: first, obvious facts, and documents of legal weight; and second, a combination of circumstances equally easy to understand, though not so easy to explain. The

¹ Duff: Mahratta History.

² Mill: British India, vi., 373.

former is always safe ground to advance upon, but the second is often equally sure, though less apparent when the crisis has passed ; for history cannot fully preserve that evidence which is clear only to the statesman's eye, and, as Lord Palmerston once said, precautions never seem so unnecessary as when they are completely successful. Both kinds of witness were in this instance provided. Nevertheless, the Governor-General pursued a friendly course, and confined himself to negotiation.

Towards the close of 1801, however, the Peishwa, himself, standing face to face with dangers which threatened to overwhelm him, proposed to subsidise a body of English troops, requiring that they should remain outside his frontiers, unless when actually needed for service. This would have secured him their aid without imposing on him their influence—a result altogether inefficacious.¹ Besides, instead of offering any reasonable guarantee for the payment of their cost, he wished to assign for their maintenance a tract of land he had not yet acquired for himself, and which they would have had to subdue. They

¹ Malcolm : Political History, 288.

would thus have been mercenaries depending for support on the success of their swords in a piratical expedition. The Peishwa, when these conditions were refused, began to meditate on others. No longer able to stand without assistance, he applied to the only power which could afford it, or would be faithful to its terms. Had he accepted the original treaty, his pride would have been spared the humiliation of this request, and the flight from his capital, which afterwards brought him to the feet of the conquerors he had endeavoured to betray.¹ It appears a peculiar quality of Oriental princes to refuse, with inveterate tenacity, all that is required of them, until, in a panic, they surrender at discretion more than ever was desired. The Mahratta sovereign acted in this manner. He avoided the explanation of his wants until the opportunity was gone, and then avowed all his purpose, only declaring himself, indeed, prepared for a friendly alliance, after being detected in a hostile conspiracy.

¹ Auber : British Power in India, ii., 287.

CHAPTER III.

FIRST MAHRATTA WAR.

HOLKAR and Sindiah were the most powerful chiefs who held territories under the Peishwa by the fief of the spear. The former had sprung from a martial race of shepherds; the latter was the descendant of a slipper-bearer. Both had, by their rapid flights of fortune so common to the heroes of the East, run, within a few years, the whole course of crime and adventure from dependence to power. Accident, valour, conduct, had won them an ascendancy in the country where their ancestors had tended flocks, or performed the menial offices of a palace. As these men rose, their master declined, until they themselves quarrelled over the absolute possession of

his person. Rivals for the supremacy at Poonah, each sought to wrest from the other the prizes he had acquired from fortune. Both openly defied their nominal sovereign; both drove vast herds of armed men to battle, with the bloody scourge of their ambition; and every triumph gained by either, was purchased at a terrible cost of life, and the merciless devastation of the land.¹ At length, their jealousy burst from the secret recesses where it had accumulated in their breasts, and they armed each against the other. They fought, and Holkar fled before the victorious cavalry of Sindiah.

The English now feared a general convulsion in central India. It had long been the theatre of continual conflict; but the scattered elements were gathering themselves into one cloud, which threatened to burst and consume every salutary institution, and every work of peace in the whole country. Hordes of banditti daily poured in from Malwa—from Hindustan—from all the surrounding mountains, to gather round whichever flag promised to be triumphant; and no prospect offered that the belligerents would cease

¹ Malcolm : *Memoir of Central India*, ii., 17.

while there was a district to burn—a village to sack—a city to pillage and destroy. When this was accomplished, who could hope that these fierce and brutal savages would disperse in peace, or remain to cultivate the land they had turned into a desert? Would they not continue to make a traffic of their valour; and tempted eastward by the richer plains contiguous to the sea, roll down their legions like a volcanic tide, to spoil the happier provinces half regenerated under a liberal sway? Not only was this possible,—it was inevitable, and imposed on Lord Wellesley the necessity of resolute action.¹

He proposed an alliance to Sindiah, that he should subsidise a British force; that he should submit to their arbitration his disputes with rival powers, and abandon all intercourse with the French, who were then at war with us. These stipulations were suggested, but not insisted upon. The Governor-General, however, boldly announced his desire of reducing the Mahrattas to dependence on the Company.² It was a manly policy, at once just and wise. The negotiations, however, were not pressed, as it was evident

¹ Malcolm : Political History, 289.

² Mill : British India, vi., 78.

Sindiah would not comply. Meanwhile, Holkar repaired his loss, and in October, 1801, reversed the fortune of the contest by a battle in which his splendid valour animated an enthusiastic army to victory.¹

Before the middle of the next year intelligence arrived in India, that the peace of Amiens was concluded;² a treaty of wax and parchment, abating nothing of the mutual rancour of the contracting parties. An opportunity was thus again offered to French intrigue. If Sindiah regained success against Holkar, which seemed probable, nothing remained to divide with him control over the Mahratta Empire from the borders of the Ganges to the sea of Malabar. To those acquainted with his mind, with his army, with the influence and authority of the French officers in his camp, it is clear that he might, with their assistance, have organised within a few years a military power which would shake the very basis of the Company's dominions.

In the East there is always a large scattered population, never averse from rebellion, and waiting only a promising occasion to join their

¹ Duff: Mahratta History.

² Heeren: European States, ii., 255.

palinodes with any conqueror that overthrows or threatens the authority actually in existence. Every hour of delay increases this danger.¹

The Peishwa became less imperious as the danger approached him. He again made a proposal to the Governor-General. It is important to notice the situation he occupied, because it has been insinuated that the English deluded him into engagements with them by magnifying the perils which surrounded him. Two mighty factions were raging in the state; two parties divided the military families of the nation, and the Peishwa knew that, whichever won, he must perish, unless the Company's protection was extended to him. The rebel was in his capital; he was a fugitive, and the Company alone could save him; he therefore accepted a treaty which was offered at his earnest request. The engagement was at once ratified, and it was now the duty of the English to replace him in his due position in the Mahratta confederation.²

By the memorable treaty of Bassein, signed on the last day of December, 1802, the future

¹ Malcolm: Political History, 288.

² Thornton: History of India.

destiny of Hindustan was decided. It engaged the English to furnish the Peishwa with a subsidiary force of six battalions of native infantry, and a complement of artillery, in payment for which that prince agreed to cede territory producing twenty-six lacs of rupees. All his claims, and those of his family on the Surat and the British districts in Guzerat, were finally settled; and he promised to appeal only to the arbitration of the Company in his quarrels with the Nizam, and the house of the Guicowar in Guzerat, whose previous engagements with the English he fully recognised. He engaged also to discharge from his service every European belonging to a nation in hostility with us, or who might be discovered plotting or intriguing to our disadvantage. Several of the inferior chiefs were admitted to the signature of this compact, and all seemed to promise the peaceful restoration of the Peishwa to his throne. A high and virtuous principle had guided the Governor-General—a principle the neglect of which is visible in the curse which rests upon Oude, as well as in the chronic disorganization which afflicts the great Subah of the Deccan. He declared at the outset that, did he find the rule of the Mahratta sovereign

repugnant to the mass of his subjects, he would not force him on them, or give to him an army for the oppression of his people,¹ a service never grateful to the British soldier. His mission should be to make free, and not to enslave, and this country will never perfect its reputation in India, until it declares that its regiments shall no longer be the Janissary legions of an Indian tyranny, to collect taxes from a miserable people, and, as in Oude, to protect a prince who vindicates the claims of his exchequer by firing forty villages at a time.² The new agreement was communicated to Sindiah, who was invited to co-operate in restoring the Peishwa. He expressed his full approbation of the engagement.

That, however, was only to gain time for maturing his plans. While the English marched with their ally to Poonah, and reseated him on the Musnud, Sindiah revolved new plots of ambition. He confessed that the treaty of Bassein contained nothing in the slightest degree injurious to his legitimate authority; yet added, "After my interview with the Rajah of Berar, you shall be informed whether we will have peace or war."³

¹ Mill: British India, vi., 407.

² Notes of an Indian Official: Unpublished.

³ Malcolm: Political History, 297.

This extraordinary answer, at once an insult and a menace, showed the Governor-General that the prospect was not quite so tranquil as he imagined. It is confessed, that when he signed the treaty of Bassein, he anticipated not even the chance of hostilities arising from it.¹ He hoped, as he desired, to settle the political affairs of India under the seal of peace. No insult, no provocation, no slight, of any kind, was offer to Sindiah.

That implacable chief, however, refused every proposal for an amicable adjustment of differences. He was confident in his own resources, and expected effectual aid from the valley of Berar.

The prince of that country, which had once formed part of the Mogul Empire,² had, until then, by judicious conduct, preserved his territories intact. He had received valuable services from the British Government; and, by remaining neutral in the wars of the Mahratta confederacy, escaped the risk and injury suffered by others. Thus it was, on the plea of no prescriptive duty, that he now joined with Sindiah; but, simply from hostile feelings towards the Company.³ He

¹ Mill: British India, vi., 403.

² Hamilton: Hindustan, ii., 108.

³ Princes of India, 116.

had dreams, also, of placing himself at the head of the Mahratta states, and, though a mission of conciliation was sent to him from Calcutta, persevered in his warlike course.

Sindiah, with this ally, now hung in a threatening attitude over the British frontier, and refused to retire within the boundaries of his own state, or give any pledge of his pacific conduct. The season was passing away, and at length, when he had exhausted every device of evasion, deceit, and falsehood, Sindiah declared he would not retire, unless the British set him an example. What instance in their history led him to hope they would act in this imbecile manner, is not to be guessed; but he was disappointed if he expected that they would thus invite him on to pillage and victory. Peace was now impossible, and a war broke out, which the writer who condemned it bitterly in his history, confessed in his evidence before the House of Commons, in 1832, was a war of necessity.¹

It was undertaken to bring, at least to an outward observance of the laws of peace and honesty, a nation which had, from the beginning, flourished on plunder; and which, though per-

¹ Mill : Political Evidence, 1832, i., 10.

petually robbing, never became rich; was for ever devouring the acquisitions it made; and was continually preparing for new depredations.¹

The justification of this policy is clear. The English had, in the course of many years, connected themselves with the politics of Hyderabad. They had at length become united, by the closest union, to that state, and guaranteed its safety and independence. In hostility to it stood a power which, ever since its birth, had maintained an internecine war in India. To prevent that power from destroying their ally, and injuring them, it was necessary to bind him in a treaty of peace, or reduce him in war. They could not keep faith unless they accomplished this. They did accomplish it, by a pacific arrangement, when the Peishwa's feudatory rose up and denied their right to form such engagement—having previously declared it to be thoroughly equitable. He assembled an army, and advanced upon their frontier. They desired him to retire; but he beat his drums for additional legions to lead against them. They then attacked him, when he was encamped in the very gateway of their empire.

¹ Thornton: History of India.

CHAPTER IV.

CONQUESTS FROM THE MAHRATTAS.

PEN after pen has depicted the splendid conduct of that war. Alighur, Delhi, and Agra, were captured; victories were gained on the fields of Laswarree and Assaye, and Arghaum and Ghawilgur added their triumphs to the accumulated trophies and achievements of the British arms in India. Success everywhere accompanied their flag. Young Wellington gave the early earnest of that commanding genius which at a later period of his life watched over the trenches at Torres Vedras, and crushed the Corsican devastator at Waterloo. In December, 1803, a treaty was concluded, and an immense expansion of the Company's Empire took place. It conquered for itself and for its allies

all Sindiah's territories in Hindustan, to the north of those held by the Rajahs of Jypore, Jodepore, and the Rana of Gohud, with the exception of a few portions. The forts of Baroach and Ahmednuggur were also ceded. No claims were hereafter to be made on the nominal Emperor, Shah Alum, on the British Government, or any of its allies. Should Sindiah at any time enter into a defensive treaty, the expense of a subsidiary corps should be defrayed from the country he now yielded. In addition to this, the English agreed to pay fifteen lacs of rupees in pensions to the officers in his service, who suffered loss by this transaction. Many villages and provinces which were particularly desired by him, because they had been hereditary in his family, were granted to him. His ministers then acknowledged that the treaty was far more generous than could have been expected.¹

The division of the conquered country was immediately effected. Portions were distributed between the Nizam and the Peishwa, while the rest was added, in a mass, to the Company's Empire.²

¹ Malcolm : Political History, 310.

² Mill : British India, vi., 454.

This was by no means the end of the great Mahratta war. The succeeding episode, however, may be justified in a very few words. Holkar was unsubdued. When the struggle commenced, he promised to join the confederacy against the British Government, made a treaty of alliance, but failed to perform any part in the campaign. When, however, the peace was concluded, he was, with an army, on the borders of the Kypore territory, then under British protection. Nevertheless, he continued to profess friendship for the Company, while his horde of freebooters menaced the tranquillity of Hindustan.¹ Holkar wrote numerous letters, endeavouring to raise the native princes to hostilities against the English. He plundered the territories of some of their allies and dependents, and General Lake took up a position in a quarter where his depredations were most extensive. A conciliatory letter was then addressed to him. The British Government offered to allow him to remain unmolested in his dominions, to forgive his past aggressions, and to live in amity with him, if he would withdraw his predatory troops,

¹ Malcolm: Political History, 313.

and abstain from further acts of hostility. He refused to accept these terms, but demanded that large concessions should be made to him. He required to be permitted to levy tribute, according to the custom of his ancestors; that eleven fine districts in the Doab and Bundelcund, which had formerly belonged to his family, should be given to him, with the province of Hurriana, and that upon this basis a treaty should be concluded with him, similar to that which had been ratified with Sindiah.¹

When these extravagant demands, which rested on no shadow of a claim, had been refused, Holkar loudly vaunted his design of ravaging the Company's provinces. The concluding paragraph of a letter to General Wellesley was in these terms:

“Countries of many hundred coss shall be overrun and plundered. Lord Lake shall not have leisure to breathe for a moment; and calamities will fall on lacs of human beings, in continual war, by the attacks of my army, which overwhelms like the waves of the sea.”

¹ Mill: *British India*, vi., 564.

To this menace he added active aggression. He sent an envoy to Sindiah, requiring his aid in an attack on the English. Next, he assaulted Jypore, the safety of which was expressly guaranteed by the Company.¹

War was, therefore, declared against him. A brilliant campaign followed, distinguished by the disastrous siege of Bhurtpore. A bloody and desperate battle took place under the walls of Deeg; the Mahratta cavalry was broken on the plain of Futtighur, and the army of the imperious chief was driven, amid portentous havoc, across the stream of Chumbul. Holkar was subdued. This long and glorious conflict added largely to our empire. The whole Mahratta war, indeed, was a splendid train of conquests.

It gave us Delhi, an imperial province, with its ancient city. The British were now seated in the capital of the Patan and the Mogul Empire, whose ruins spread over a space of twenty miles. Here were the splendid palaces of the Omrahs—here were the gorgeous mosques of the Mohammedan lords of India—here were

¹ Malcolm: Political History, 306.

the celebrated gardens of Shalimar; but their beauty was in a perishing state, and the declining glories of the monarchy left them amid a wilderness of pavilions stripped of their ornaments, of temples without worshippers, and sepulchres shared between the dead and beasts of prey.

Next among our acquisitions was Agra, with its famous city, founded by Akbar, whose mausoleum still remains conspicuous amongst its ruins. The towers and domes of the Taj Mahal, unrivalled for grace and beauty, with the Pearl Mosque, and palace of Shah Jehan, became trophies of our success. Three eras of power are symbolized by the monuments of Agra. First, that of the Mogul, which lavished on fret-work and mosaic, on marble and stone, on silver trellises, and roofs painted in gold and crimson, the wealth of fertile provinces. And these great memorials of art, which appear the achievements of a sumptuous munificence, were designed in the same spirit which planned the structures of the Sypselidæ—to enslave the time and labour of the people. The Jats and the Mahrattas, whose reign is remembered as a curse, came as the Vandals of the East, and left behind ruins, as the only memorial of their

sway.¹ Under neither were the people happy or secure. The English, instead of structures dedicated to the pomp of kings, whether dead or living, reared halls of justice, factories, and edifices of public value, whose proportions and grandeur, though not emulous of the Imperial sepulchres of the Indian dynasty, excel them in true worth, because they stand amidst prosperity instead of desolation.

Less brilliant, but equally valuable, were the other acquisitions of this war. The level and fertile tracts of the Upper Doab, infested by gangs of robbers, who are now almost wholly eradicated;² the province of Hurriana, with its many large towns, once populous, but then in decay; the productive district of Saharunpure, between the Ganges and the Jumna; the city of Meerut, amid the suffocating sandhills of Rajpootana; the tremendous fortress of Alighur, which had been stormed under General Lake; Etawah, on the sacred river; the large and valuable territory of Bundelcund, in the Allahabad province; the rich country of Cuttack;

¹ Sleeman: *Rambles*, ii., 41.

² See Ida Pfeiffer's *Voyage round the World*, for remarks on the extirpation of the Dacoit gangs.

the town of Balasore; the famous temple of Juggernat, and large districts in Guzerat, had been added to our dominions.¹ Since, therefore, there are many who require that, to prove the wisdom of any policy, its result shall be worth its cost, the Mahratta war offers every kind of justification.

Consequently, in this important chapter of our Indian history, it seems that we stand justified before the world. It is not to flatter the principle of conquest, but to establish the right of men to employ arms where arms alone can protect them, that we should aim at exhibiting the truth of this. A capital maxim of politics is, that if there be anywhere a nation of a restless and mischievous disposition, always ready to injure others, to traverse their designs, and to raise domestic troubles among them, all have a right to join, in order to repress and chastise it, and put it ever after out of its power to injure them.² Holkar too late repented his improvident insolence. He imagined that it was reserved for him to fulfil what Hyder had failed to achieve—to conquer the conquerors of

¹ Hamilton: *Hindustan*.

² Vattel: *Law of Nations*, ii., 53.

the Mogul; to awe, to humble, and to command all India.¹ With the distempered strength of a barbarian exasperated by the failure of his plans, he rushed into war, and one or two reverses of the English animated him in the struggle. But the enemy he had to cope with was not accustomed to failure. Defeated, but not disgraced, at Bhurtpore, they retrieved their fame at Deeg and Alighur, and the Mahratta chieftain saw all his forces scattered in dismay, derangement, and confusion.² When the Company found itself victorious, it seized large tracts of country and many rich cities, to redeem the profusion of the war. In this it acted under the common law of nations, which allows that an injury gives to a state the right to provide for its future safety, by taking from the violator the means of oppression.³

¹ Auber: *British Power in India*, ii., 402.

² Mill: *British India*, vi., 595.

³ Vattel: *Law of Nations*, iii., iii., 45.

CHAPTER V.

RESULTS OF LORD WELLESLEY'S REIGN.

LORD WELLESLEY left India on the 20th of August, 1805. He had witnessed within seven years at least ten revolutions in states, some of them the most important in Asia. The re-animated hopes of the French had been extinguished; the aged and venerable Emperor of Delhi enjoyed, under the protection of the English, an affluent repose; the Viceroy of the Deccan, instead of suffering annually from an invasion, was secure behind numerous battalions of British troops; his hereditary enemies had been reduced; the tyranny of Tippoo Sultan had been annihilated, and a descendant of the ancient Rajahs, after a usurpation of eight-and-thirty

years, had been elevated to a principedom in the Mysore; the Carnatic had been released from an imbecile despotism, and was already beginning to flourish. Madras and Bengal, until then separated, had been combined by the acquisition of Cuttack; five provinces conquered in Guzerat, Canara—the ancient Limirica—and Malabar, had extended our power along nearly the whole coast, from the mouths of the Ganges to the mouths of the Indus. The Peishwa, instead of being an uncompromising enemy, had become a useful ally. Peace was established throughout the southern divisions of the peninsula. Sindiah had been crushed. Holkar, instead of “overwhelming us as the waves of the sea,” had fled before our troops, and sunk from the condition of a prince to that of a buccannering chief, with a body of followers whom he could never again persuade to face the bayonets, or meet the fire of a British army. Our authority was extended over the whole country of the Two Rivers, along the right bank of the Jumna, and a line of protected states lay between us and the Mahrattas. An improved plan of administration, a more honourable spirit of justice, and a loftier view of the relations which had sprung up between Great Britain and the dusky

racess of Asia, appeared to promise a happy future to India. The causes of war, however, were not yet eradicated; for while one power remained capable of disturbing the tranquillity of the region, the Company could only sit down under an unsafe and dependent peace.¹

¹ Malcolm: Political Hist. of India, 385.

CHAPTER VI.

CHANGE OF POLICY IN INDIA.

MEANWHILE in England fear pervaded the public mind lest the mighty wars in which Lord Wellesley had engaged should ruin our Indian Empire. Statesmen, in obedience to the prevailing sentiments of the day, looked around them for a new Governor-General, who was likely to develop their pacific views. Lord Cornwallis was again presented for the office. His second service was accepted, and in June, 1805, he again landed in India. Every impression he had received during his retirement was favourable to the idea that tranquillity should be secured at any cost. At this time, Sindiah was detaining in his camp an English gentleman,

deputed as acting resident, and Lord Wellesley was threatening him with the consequences of an insult so gross, and so entirely inconsistent with the friendly terms on which he professed to stand with us.¹

Lord Cornwallis, consequently, succeeded to the conduct of a negotiation which should have been concluded not only in a dignified, but even in a haughty manner. If, however, the resident was released before any concessions were offered to Sindiah, it was not on account of the Governor-General's care for the reputation of his country. The Mahratta chief made claims for some restitution of conquered territory, and though his right was not in the least degree proved or admitted, the fortress of Gwalior, with a part of the province of Gohud, was ceded to him. In return, he gave up the pensions for which he had stipulated in behalf of his officers, and the territory northward of the Chumbul—Dholpur, Baree, and Rajah Ker-rah—which he had acquired by treaty. The Company made no claim to any rule, tribute, or revenue south of that river. In addition to

¹ Mill: British India, vi., 637.

this, they granted him a splendid pension, with valuable Jaghires for his wife and daughter. They also engaged to make no compacts with the chieftains tributary to Sindiah, or to interfere between him and Holkar.¹

So far the policy of Lord Cornwallis, with the exception of his surrender of dignity in the case of the British resident, might have been serviceable to the interests of true peace in India. Had it been followed, however, by a course of negotiations pursued in a similar spirit of concession, it is difficult to imagine the troubles which might have arisen. Diplomacy in the East cannot be conducted on the same principles as in the West. Conciliation is there seldom or never understood. It is taken as a display, not of magnanimity, but of fear. Liberal politics are foreign to the philosophy of an Oriental prince. When he refrains from an act of power, it is never from generosity, but always from prudence; and if he encounter treatment of this kind, it is imputed invariably to one motive. Instead, therefore, of deterring him from aggressions, it simply encourages him to make

¹ Auber : British Power, ii, 398.

them; as Lord Cornwallis would probably have discovered, had he long continued to occupy his seat at the head of the councils of India. Death, however, cut short his progress; and, however we may decide on the wisdom of his second administration, we cannot refuse to say, that he closed an honourable and virtuous career, sincerely devoting himself to the service of his country.

But though the loss of a man so good, who had been so valuable to Great Britain, was a subject for regret, we cannot but rejoice that Lord Cornwallis did not continue to administer the affairs of British India. Had he carried out the policy he declared himself to have adopted, he would infallibly have brought our empire, if not to total ruin, at least to the brink of it. Not content with offering to abandon the English resident insolently detained in Sindiah's camp, and compromising with that chieftain the terms of the recent treaty, he resolved to restore to Holkar all the territories and possessions which had been conquered from him.¹ The country in the region of the Jumna he proposed to divide

¹ Mill : British India, vi., 649.

among the protected princes, on condition of their renouncing the alliances they enjoyed with the Company. Thus the English would be bound to defend no state against any enemy. He desired also to give up the territory northward and southward of Delhi, and the precipitance with which these transactions were hurried forward, threatened nothing but danger.

The rank and duty of supreme governor devolved on Sir George Barlow, Senior Member of Council. He inherited the views of his predecessor, and desired to relinquish altogether the protective system, and leave a swarm of petty chiefs to tear each to pieces, without interfering to prevent them—a course altogether inconsistent with the character of the British Government.¹ All this while, as though to convince him of the futility of the hopes he based upon this plan, Holkar was continuing hostilities. These were, however, speedily concluded by a disgraceful treaty.²

It engaged him to renounce all claim to the districts of Tonk Rumpoorah, Boondee, and lands to the north of the Chumbul. The Com-

¹ Wilson: Notes, vi., 659.

² Grant, iii., 317.

pany, on the other hand, promised not to interfere with any of his dependents to the south of that river, and to restore, at the expiration of eighteen months, numerous conquered forts and territories, provided the conduct of Holkar was satisfactory. He renounced his claims on Bundelcund and Poonah, as well as all others against the British Government; promised to entertain no Europeans in his service without our consent, and to dismiss Gaulka, an obnoxious minister, for ever from his employ. On these conditions Holkar was allowed to return into Hindustan, by a prescribed route from his retreat beyond the stream of the Hyphasis.

Had this been the whole compact, little could have been said against it. Sir George Barlow, however, was inclined to concede. The treaty rescued the valuable provinces of Tonk Rampoorah from the tyranny of Holkar; but the Governor-General, by a declaratory article, gave them to him, because the only remaining alternative was to keep them, or guarantee their independence. Lord Lake, who was a statesman as well as a soldier of extraordinary merit, endeavoured in vain to change these views; but the principle of concession prevailed, and the

provinces were surrendered. Typore was next abandoned, and the Rajah would also have been excluded from the protection of the Company's Government, had the policy of Sir George Barlow been willingly seconded by the commander-in-chief. A system so neutral and selfish could not have been developed without imperilling the whole fabric of British Indian dominion; but, fortunately, better counsels speedily prevailed, and the character of the great merchant association was re-established. It had risen to empire by the operations of many and various causes, and its reputation, its dignity, its lustre, no less than its intrinsic strength, reposed upon the basis which two Governor-Generals had combined to shake. No nobler task could be undertaken by any government than that of establishing and upholding union and tranquillity over so wide and populous a region, and preparing so many millions, long divided under hostile standards, for that discipline of civilization which changes the gross passions of barbarians into the aspirations that urge more instructed races to cultivate peace, and flourish by the arts of peace alone.¹

¹ Malcolm : Political History, 441.

CHAPTER. VII.

POLITICAL STATE OF INDIA.

THE supremacy of Great Britain was not yet acknowledged by the whole of India. Its commanding attitude, however, surprised all Europe, and created dismay among the remaining potentates of the East. During several years, the general peace remained undisturbed, petty quarrels only arising, which scarcely involved the consideration of any political principle. The transactions with the Punjab, with Sindh, and with Afghanistan, were important, but need not be detached from the particular inquiry into our more recent policy towards those countries. The social and civil administration of the Company, modified by several changes, was better

adapted to the circumstances of the East, and an interval of peace allowed opportunities for the consolidation of the empire. No further conquests took place, until the Earl of Moira was appointed Governor-General, in 1814. In the meanwhile, a revolution took place in the constitution of the Company, which has had the fortune to excite innumerable enemies.

In 1811, the political system of India was composed of subsidiary, of federative, and of independent states, related by various ties to the British Government, besides some petty communities, to which it was bound by no connection.

The Company had formed subsidiary alliances with the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Peishwa, the Guicowar, the Rajahs of Mysore, Travancore, and Cochin, and the Nawab of Oude. We engaged to protect the native state from dissensions at home and invasions from abroad, but our troops were not to be employed in the civil administration or collection of the revenue. In return for the protection thus bestowed, the English received a compensation in money or territory, besides which the subsidising prince undertook to support a contingent force to act when required in concert

with them, and was bound to abstain from all independent political intercourse with any other of the Indian princes. When great exigencies arose, the Company was to assume the entire direction over all the resources of the state.

In the second class were numerous small principalities enjoying British protection without subsidising a force. The chief of these were the Rajahs of Bhurtpore and Macherry.

In the third order of powers were Sindiah, Holkar, and the Nagpore Rajahs. The English were at peace with them, and maintained an ambassador at each of their Courts.¹

The fourth description was composed of petty irregular communities, never recognised as separate states, which evinced great reluctance to form any engagements whatever.

¹ Walter Hamilton : Hindustan, i., 29.

CHAPTER VIII.

WAR WITH NEPAUL.

THE next conquest achieved by the British was that of some territories belonging to Nepaul. The cause of the war may now be briefly examined.

Lord Moira reached India in October, 1813. The political state of the country did not promise any protracted continuance of peace. The pacific administrations which had preceded his, so far from eradicating the sources of contention, had scattered wide the causes of war; because instead of imposing on the native princes a just idea of the authority to which they stood related, they had inspired them with the hope of regaining their ascendancy by force of arms.

The kingdom of Nepaul presented along the northern frontier of the British possessions, a territory from seven to eight hundred miles in length. It was contiguous to the provinces of Delhi, of Rohilcund, of Gorruckpur, of Saran, of Tirhut, and Purnia. The name was originally applied to a valley of moderate extent in the bosom of the Himalaya,¹ under the shadow of that mighty range which towers over the desolate tracts of Tibet. The Goorkha tribes, however, who rose there, extended the limits of their country far on either side. They always displayed a spirit of rapacity, and declined to establish amicable relations with the English, who sought their alliance. Their insolence not only attacked the various petty states, whose territories lay in contiguity with their own, but assailed and insulted the living type of Buddha in Lhasa, beyond the northern hills. Then, when the imperial power of China was excited against them, and after a Chinese army had threatened their existence, and looked down from crests of the Himalaya upon the plains of Bengal,² a treaty was concluded; but its infraction was so frequent

¹ Wilson : Continuation, viii., 5.

² Kirkpatrick : Account of Nepaul, 6.

that the British Government declared it dissolved. This happened while Lord Wellesley was Governor-General, and since that period no intercourse had taken place, except that of aggression on the one side and remonstrance on the other.

The Nepaulese, however, were not content with this seclusion. They commenced a series of more important encroachments upon the Company's territories, as well as upon those of its allies. One of these was the seizure and murder of a chief tributary to us, whose lands they appropriated. The next was the occupation of Bhopal, two-thirds of which they were allowed by our supineness to hold. When required to relinquish the districts thus seized, they crossed the Tesnarres, which had hitherto set a limit to their audacity, and at the same time spread their inroads from Sheoray into Deberah. Besides this they seized, plundered, and burned some villages in Salem; captured a number of villages which had belonged to the English for more than thirty years, and, after once promising to forbear, attacked a police station in Bhopal and assassinated eighteen of the officers. One man who surrendered was murdered in cold blood. All

this while negotiations were carrying on which none but a Governor-General most philosophic in his moderation would have continued after such an outrage. A remonstrance was sent, in a courteous letter, to those chieftains who were in truth no better than organized banditti. If there was any virtue in this proceeding, it was most assuredly the virtue of forbearance; but forbearance towards an enemy is sometimes treachery towards an ally. Whatever the character of our conciliatory policy was, it did not succeed. No reply was made, but, instead, a series of demands accompanied with menaces.¹

In addition to these aggressions, the Nepaulese had seized more than two hundred villages in Tirhut; they had invaded five out of the eight divisions of the Pergunnah of Khyrapure; they had attacked several possessions of the protected Sikh chiefs;² they had claimed an extensive tract in the Zilla of Moradabad, and carried on their aggressions from the banks of the Tista to the banks of the Sutlej.³ When the last act of outrage was committed, the Nepaulese

¹ Thornton : History of India.

² Wilson : British India, viii., 14.

³ Hastings : in Nepaul Papers, 877.

Rajah avowed and defended it, and refused all reparation. He was advised not to risk the issue of an armed struggle. Some of his more judicious counsellors joined in seeking to dissuade him, saying that they had hitherto hunted deer, but must now prepare to combat with tigers.¹ He vaunted his former triumphs, the military glories of Nepaul, its natural strength, and the certain failure of the English. They had been driven from Bhurtpore, which was the work of man; how then should they storm the mountain citadel, which was built by the hands of God?²

Reparation being thus refused, nothing remained but to enforce it at the point of the sword. War was therefore declared. The result of the campaign, which it requires nothing more than the simplest narrative to justify, added to the British Indian Empire all the country between the Sutlej and the Jumna—an Alpine tract among whose barren hills lie valleys of extreme fertility, where the strawberry attains perfection, and where the soil is sprinkled with a profusion of elegant flowers. To this was added the province of Seringhur, which contains the holy region

¹ Prinsep : Transactions in India, i., Ap., 457.

² Wilson : British India, viii., 18.

where the Ganges springs, and Kumaon, connected politically as well as geographically with that country.¹

These conquests embraced no rich or extensive territories; but they opened an intercourse with the wild regions of northern India; they gave us the command of one gateway to the neglected countries of central Asia; and they spread a wide field for civilization to achieve her silent but immortal triumphs. The barbarous mountaineers are being reclaimed; towns are springing up among the rocky solitudes; bridges offer a path across the torrent and the ravine; and the shepherds are leading their flocks in peace over the slopes which connect the sultry levels of Bengal with the vales of Paradise, which bloom in the depths of the Himalaya. There the northern races might flourish and multiply; there the English constitution thrives; there already the desolation of nature is subdued, and a mountain wilderness, remote in Asia, wears a happier and more hopeful aspect than the scenes most known to Europe—the valleys of Italy and Greece.²

¹ Hamilton, ii., 633.

² Wilson: *British India*, viii., 83.

CHAPTER IX.

CONQUEST OF CEYLON.

ONCE in the course of this narrative we exchange continental India for an island in the sea which washes round the peninsula. The conquest of Ceylon is to be explained; but all other acquisitions in insular Asia belong to a separate division of history.¹

Ceylon occupies a position at the western entrance of the Bay of Bengal, about a hundred and fifty miles from Cape Comorin. It is an extensive

¹ I have for several years been engaged upon, and have now nearly completed, a History of the Indian Archipelago, with a particular description of the piratical system. That of the Dyaks in Borneo is based chiefly on the unpublished notes of a Resident in the Archipelago.

island, having an area of about twenty-seven thousand miles; and, viewed from the sea, offers an enchanting landscape to the eye. The vivid green, more bright than any along the shores of Coromandel, covers a surface, varied by all the fantastic forms in nature. Innumerable hills, many graceful and fertile to the peak, rise in prospect among others which shoot into pinnacles, or spread their bases like pyramids, or extend like enormous battlements breached at intervals by the storm. The island is populous and fruitful. Groves of the cocoa and palmyra palm shade the plains, and coffee, cardamums, tobacco, and cabinet woods, bloom richly along the flowing outlines of its surface; but cinnamon is the gift for which Ceylon is famous,¹ clothing large tracts in gay and fragrant bloom, which captivates the sense.²

Ceylon was first colonised by the Portuguese, who attempted to seduce the people into Christianity, and then by the Dutch, who endeavoured to force them into it.³ When Holland was absorbed in the French Empire, England seized its

¹ Hamilton : ii., 489.

² Pridham : Ceylon, ii., 417.

³ Tennent : Christianity in Ceylon, 77.

colonial possessions, and a governor was appointed to administer the affairs of the settlements. These formed a belt round a native kingdom which still existed in the interior, and traced its origin through two thousand years of antiquity. Despising the Dutch while they hated them, the Princes of Kandy, behind their bulwark of forest, co-operated with the English in expelling them.¹

In 1800, to cement relations with the native King, an envoy was sent to him. The object of his mission was, ostensibly, to contract a friendly alliance, but in reality to establish our influence in the kingdom. A plan was indeed proposed for rendering the throne subservient to us, which we had no right to do.² The plot failed, and the King of Kandy, with his minister, waited for an opportunity to attack the British. Such an opportunity was not long wanting. An outrage committed upon some Cingalese was made the subject of complaint at the Court. The prince promised, but never granted redress.

The English then, pretending that offensive preparations were making in Kandy, sent a threatening letter to the King, requiring him to

¹ Davy : Ceylon, 310.

² Cordiner : Ceylon, ii., 162.

accept terms which would have put an end to his independence.¹ He replied by plundering our territory, and murdering some of our subjects. War was then proclaimed, and in 1815 the allegiance of the Kandyans, after several revolutions, was transferred to the British Government.²

This was an unjustifiable war. With it, however, the East India Company had nothing to do. It was an imperial colony, and its government was directed by the British Ministry. Much has been effected to compensate the islanders for the loss of their independence; indeed, a great work of civilization has been commenced in that unrivalled island; but it has been among the least prosperous of our Eastern possessions. The rebellions which have broken out from time to time, have been caused by ignorant and tyrannical governors, who have not had the ability to understand, or the wisdom to respect, the character of the people over whom they have been sent to rule.

¹ Wilson : British India, viii., 90.

² Pridham : Ceylon. Sirr affords some valuable information on Ceylon; but I have read no work superior to Davy's.

CHAPTER X.

CAUSES OF A NEW MAHRATTA WAR.

SOME predatory incursions into Gujerat from Cutch, which resulted in the establishment of subsidiary relations with that country; the conquest of the piratical district of Okamandel; new arrangements with Hyderabad, and with the Nawab of Oude, occupied the interval between this episode and the dawn of a new conflict with the Mahratta armies. It was the policy of Lord Wellesley's successors which left an inheritance of war to those who followed them. Seeking to establish peace on the very grounds of war, they built up a fabric which sank almost before it was completed, and displayed in its ruins evidence of the truth that consistent courage could alone

insure safety to our Indian Empire. We now arrive at the catastrophe which was hastened by the deficient statesmanship of Lord Cornwallis and Sir George Barlow—the final decay and fall of the Mahratta Empire.

New complications arose between the Company and the Peishwa. His claims upon Baroda and Hydrabad, his attempts at encroachment on the rights of his feudatory chiefs, and his vain pretensions to supremacy, renewed the discussions which the treaty of Bassein was meant to close. In violation of that compact, he sent agents to various Courts, intrigued with several princes, and allowed his ministers to offer insults to the English, which clearly showed the spirit that animated him.¹ His favourites openly spoke of their right not only to enforce humility from the other chiefs of the confederation, but to levy tribute also on Bengal, as well as on the Mysore.²

He pressed heavy claims upon the Guicowar, Prince of Baroda, who was related by treaty to the British.³ He demanded tribute from the

¹ Wilson ; British India, viii., 150.

² Prinsep : Transactions, ii., 320.

³ Sutherland : Princes of India, 107.

chiefs of Kattiwar, which the Company allowed, though they would not permit him to collect it himself. The Guicowar had farmed a portion of the revenues of Ahmedabad for ten years, expiring in 1814. He desired to renew the arrangement in perpetuity, and an agent, enjoying the confidence of the Company's residents at Baroda and Poonah, was deputed to mediate on the subject. Before trusting himself within the Peishwa's Court, he obtained from the British Government a formal guarantee for his personal security.¹

The Peishwa first endeavoured to corrupt this man, and next permitted him to be murdered, almost in his presence, with complete impunity to the assassins. He possessed full means for bringing the criminals to justice, had he been animated by the desire, and, if he was innocent, could alone prove it in this manner; if, indeed, by this, for innumerable anecdotes are contained in history of tyrants sacrificing the instruments of their wickedness, to conceal their own guilty complicity.² It was not until a peremptory

¹ Thornton : History of India.

² Such crimes are not unknown in Russia, where men have

threat of war was employed that he consented to deliver up Trimbah, the chief offender, who once accused his master of having instigated the act, though afterwards he retracted. The complicity of the Mahratta prince was, however, unequivocally proved.²

The Peishwa's intrigues, which violated the treaty of Bassein, were not unsuccessful at the Courts of the other Mahratta princes. They knew that the policy of the English was to prevent the consolidation of a new confederacy, and they knew also that by this only could they hope to enjoy again a career of spoliation.

Meanwhile, Sindiah entered into a league with the Prince of Nagpore to conquer Bhopal, a small independent state in Malwa, colonized by the Patans under Aurungzebe. Attacked by superior forces, the Rajah of this country defended himself in his capital against a vast army.³ Terrible privations afflicted the garrison, which was reduced to a tenth of its original strength.

been strangled in prison for political convenience, to hide their character as emissaries and spies, when other governments have been offended. The fate of a late agent in Central Asia may be remembered as an example.

² Wilson: *British India*, viii., 158.

³ Malcolm: *Central India*, i., 398.

In March, 1814, the town was surprised, but the hereditary valour of the Patans rallied them to the fight, and the enemy's camp was broken up. But the danger was not past, and the Rajah implored British protection.¹ He had once before, in a similar emergency, prayed for this boon, which had been refused, though he had rendered service to the Company.² Policy and justice now combined to insure the gratification of his desire. Contiguous on the one side to Berar, and on the other to the desert of the Pindarries, Bhopal was an important territory. In 1816, the Rajah died, and was succeeded by his gallant son, Nazar Mohammed. In the same year a treaty was concluded by which the new prince obtained protection. The Mahrattas were informed that they must forego their hostility to Bhopal. The Rajah of Nagpore with the Peishwa, at once professed himself satisfied with this arrangement, but died before his true sentiments could be known.

The new Rajah was surrounded by enemies. The first friend who acknowledged him on the throne was the British resident, and he at once

¹ Wilson : British India, viii., 165.

² Hamilton : i., 756.

proposed a subsidiary alliance with the Company. This was concluded without any trouble or delay. He obtained a force for the protection of his country, agreeing to pay for it in money or territory, and, in return, engaged not to enter into any negotiations without our consent.¹ Nagpore was now identified with British India.

Meanwhile, Sindiah was planning to consolidate again the scattered fragments of the Mahratta Empire. Enraged at the failure of his design on Bhopal, he spared no labour to complete his plans. Instead of uniting, however, under the command of his genius, central India fell into complete anarchy, and became the prey of a buccanneering soldiery, and still more rapacious chief. A predatory system, long in existence, grew to dangerous proportions, and hordes of freebooters, known as Pindarries, devastated all the country south of the Nerbudda.

Organized robbers as they were, the Pindarries would serve under any flag which would lead them where booty abounded. They corresponded frequently with Sindiah, declaring themselves ready to bury all the Company's possessions in

¹ Treaty with Nagpore, May, 1816.

blood and slaughter. His troops, however weak as an army, were powerful as the enemies of peace. They created a scene of ravage, which it would be well for those to contemplate who lament the subjugation of India, on account of the unhappy change it has produced. Their flying camps were moved from place to place, consuming all the substance of the land; and joining them in havoc, the neighbouring mountaineers issued from their retreats, and lent their swords to the slaughter and pillage of the natives;¹ driving the people into caverns and woods, spending all day in devastation, and retiring at night, to revel around their fires on the plunder of a hundred markets.

To complete the melancholy picture, the Court of Holkar, in secluded infamy, was the theatre of murder and intrigue. Rajpootana therefore was in a condition of misery for which conquest was the only hope. Every bond of society was dissolved; every right of authority was destroyed. Those relations which are the security of virtue existed no longer. The few who were idle, wallowed in gross indulgence; the powerful

¹ Wilson : British India, viii., 171.

glutted their swords upon the weak; the poor, who had no interest but in peace, suffered without ability to resist, and thus that depopulation and that havoc went on, which ages of good government will not effectually retrieve.¹

¹ Malcolm : Central India.

CHAPTER XI.

PINDARRIE RAVAGES IN INDIA.

THE perfect horror of this anarchy is not yet exhibited; but it is right to describe it, that the fruits of British and of Native rule may be justly contrasted. For when we inquire what the East India Company has effected, we are not to refer to the flourishing period of Mogul history, but to the state of India when it fell under their sway. It is essential also to dwell on these circumstances, since they form in part the justification of the great war which ensued.

The Pindarries formed a nation, as it were, of cavalry. They sprang up in irregular bodies in the south of India, and under the declining dynasties of the Mohammedans in the Deccan.

They by turns hired themselves to numerous masters, receiving licence to plunder, instead of pay, and lastly entered into the service of Holkar and Sindiah. Under those adventurers they divided into two parties, and lived on tracts of land allotted to them in the valley of the Nerbudda. The followers of the latter chief were the more numerous and powerful, amounting altogether to about twenty-five thousand men.¹ Their field of action was for some time confined to the territories of the Nizam, and the Rajah of Berar, and the Peishwa. Gradually, however, they grew bold, and crossed the British frontier, wasting broad districts with slaughter, flames, and pillage. A general terror spread through the country.²

Their incursions were carried on upon the plan of regular campaigns, except that no rule of civilized warfare was allowed to check their ferocity. Wherever they appeared, the most inhuman cruelties were perpetrated. Men were burnt with scalding oil, suffocated with dust, or flayed by the application of fire. Children were drowned in wells, brained against the earth,

¹ Sydenham : Papers on Pindarrie War, 24.

² Wilson : British India, viii., 184.

or torn from their mothers' breasts, and sabred.¹ Women, if not made to suffer the violence from which their modesty most recoiled, were driven to commit suicide through fear of it; and villages and towns, after being depopulated, were given to flames and plunder. The Pindarries, less powerful than the Mahrattas, less courageous than the cavalry of Hyder Ali, renewed the havoc those imperial banditti had made. Without the unwieldy weight of the first, or the terrible valour of the second, they nevertheless confounded an extensive population by the audacious fury of their inroads. In the campaigns of the East, carnage has usually attended the first rage of conquest; but the Pindarrie invasion was a crusade against life, against peace, against property, and a sense of fear was created along the whole frontier.² While there was a soldier in our service, such things could not be suffered. Retaliation was simply self-defence. Severity to them was only justice to the natives, who now confided in the protection of a civilized government.

During one rapid inroad, the Pindarries sacked more than three hundred villages, murdering,

¹ Pindarrie Papers, 55.

² Thornton: History of India.

wounding, and torturing more than four thousand people; numbers of women drowning themselves to escape the savage lust of these enemies to the peace of India.

Many petty states prayed that the ample shield of the Company's power might be thrown over them, and in this way Jagpore, Udaypur, Jodpure, and Kot, were virtually placed within the range of our empire. Following them, came others, pleading various reasons for their claim to be taken under British protection—the Rajahs of Bundi, of Khrisnagar, of Kerauli, of Banswara, of Pertabgehr, and of Dungarpur, on the borders of Malwa and Bundelcund.¹ The Governor, after a long discussion with a council still infected by the weakness of his predecessors, was enabled to take measures to suppress this system of land-piracy, against which every honest ally of the Company would have armed. Sindiah was intimately connected with the robber chiefs, but disavowed his relation. The Peishwa was still more closely connected with them, and refused to assist in turning back their destructive cohorts. He acted, indeed, as a declared enemy,

¹ Wilson : British India, viii., 208.

by conniving at the escape of the murderer Trim-bah. He instigated also a formidable insurrection against the British, and armed his fortified places, besides making every other preparation for war, while he professed the sincerest intentions of peace.¹ In all possible ways he obstructed and deceived the British Government.

As a last chance of maintaining tranquillity in our relations with the Mahratta confederacy, a new treaty was offered to the Peishwa, which should not admit of the evasions which the old one had allowed. He reluctantly accepted its stipulations, and bound himself to renounce all pretensions to stand at the head of the Mahratta states, to relinquish his false claims on the lands of Sindiah, Holkar, the Rajah of Berar, the Guicowar, the Rajah of Kolapur, and the Government of Sawantwarre; and to maintain no agents at any foreign Courts. The Company was to be the channel of all his communications with neighbouring princes. He engaged also to cede the fort of Ahmednuggur, all his possessions in Bundelcund and Malwa, and to the north of the Nerbudda, besides pledging himself to interfere

¹ Malcolm : Central India.

no more in the affairs of Hindustan.¹ In return for his repudiation of claims against the Chief of Baroda, he received an annual payment of four hundred thousand rupees; but he was compelled, instead of paying a subsidiary force himself, to yield sufficient tribute to support it.

These were severe terms; but the Peishwa deserved severe terms. He had violated with inveterate ill faith every article in the treaty of Bassein; he had, with incomparable duplicity, avowed the most cordial friendship, while he laboured to urge the heads of the Mahratta confederacy into a war with the British.² He had sanctioned, if not actually perpetrated, the murder of an ambassador, and his punishment was mild in comparison with his offences. Indeed, it was more nominal than real; for the rights of which he was deprived he had long been unable to enjoy, through the disorganization of his government. The ceded lands in Malwa, and the relinquished privileges in Bundelcund, were of no actual value to him, for he was too weak to enforce his claim. His dispute with Baroda was settled on more favourable terms than he could

¹ Treaty with the Peishwa, June, 1817.

² Duff: Mahratta History.

have secured himself; but what he lamented was that less hope remained to him of leading the Mahrattas once more, in a confederated host, against the East India Company.¹

¹ Wilson : British India, viii., 224.

CHAPTER XII.

DESTRUCTION OF THE MAHRATTAS.

THE law of nations, though it justifies the use of victory by conquest, cannot force the defeated power to acknowledge itself justly chastised. We cannot, therefore, impute to the Peishwa as a crime that he meditated escape from a compact forced upon him by superior power, though we desire to vindicate the authority which imposed it on him. Dissatisfied, not unnaturally, though unreasonably, he made incessant preparations to dissolve every bond in the corrosive elements of war. Within four months after the treaty of peace was signed, not a horseman in his dominions was out of employ; but the English waited for the actual challenge of hostilities.

They were in the meantime engaged in the Pindarrie campaign. An army was levied in the Deccan, another was raised in Bengal, and preparations were made to pour against the marauding hordes of the central country those powerful regiments which, in exulting valour, had overwhelmed the bravest legions in Asia. The Peishwa now commenced active operations. He despatched emissaries to engage the Mahratta chiefs in the cause of the robber tribes; he sent spies to tamper with the British troops, and corrupt them from their fidelity. These acts were known, but disregarded, in the hope that the prince would not carry his folly to recklessness. But he was bent on his enterprise. With the audacity of a conqueror who imagines he shall never be defeated, or the desperation of an adventurer who thinks he has nothing to lose, he attacked and burnt the British residency at Poonah.¹ Immediately, a battle took place. Ten thousand trained Mahratta cavalry, ten thousand foot, an immense train of ordnance, showed in portentous strength on the neighbouring hills. Three thousand infantry, with no horse and no

¹ Thornton: History of India.

great guns, were all they had to oppose them. But there was the unfailing courage of a nation which has an hereditary faith in its own achievements, and the victory was abandoned to the English.¹

War was then unequivocally declared against the Peishwa, and it remained for the Governor-General to secure for India that peace which it could never hope to enjoy, while a Mahratta chief was able to arm a single man against it.

Sindiah gave consent to the passage of troops; but it was necessary to secure his neutrality, if not his co-operation. His sentiments speedily displayed themselves. It was discovered that he incited the Nepaulese to make war on the enemy who had so lately broken their pride. This was amply proved by intercepted correspondence.² It was known also that he was in league with the nomadic hordes of cavalry from the north of the peninsula, which still contended on his frontier.³ Nevertheless a treaty was formed with him, one stipulation of which was that the strong fortress of Asseghur should

¹ Papers : Mahratta War, 123.

² Malcolm : Central India.

³ Heeren : European States, ii., 293.

be open to a garrison. When the British demanded admittance, it was refused. They levied siege; the fort capitulated, and a letter was found directing the governor to obey only the commands of the Peishwa. It was evident that Sindiah had joined that prince. He, indeed, avowed the document; but in consideration of his frank plea, of the ancient ties which united him to the government of Poonah, Lord Moira who had now attained the title of Hastings, with politic liberality refrained from declaring war against him.

There were, however, other stipulations in the new treaty with Sindiah. He engaged to assist us against the Pindarries, and a share of the spoil was promised to him. The war continued, and the ravagers of India, cut to pieces in every direction, fled into the deserts and the jungle—scattered, broken, and humiliated, but not by any aid given by the Mahrattas. They, on the contrary, never ceased to show their hatred of the Company's Government.

The Rajah of Nagpore was the first to join in hostilities against the English. Though a subsidiary prince, he broke the treaty by levying troops, and, erecting the famous golden banner of

the fallen empire, attacked our countrymen in their cantonments.¹ The battle of Sitibaldi, achieved against forces immensely superior, crowned the prestige of the British arms, and the masses of cavalry ranked under the prince's flag were routed in confusion.²

Terms were offered to the Rajah, which he refused, but a new battle near his capital brought him to the feet of the British Government. His dominions then lapsed under the recognised influence of the Company; a large part of his territories—all those to the north of the Nerbudda, with some districts on the southern banks, and his rights in Berar, Sirguja, Gawilghur, and Jaspur, being actually ceded; while he was allowed to reign under the guns of a British fort.³ Thus we perceive that it was their own persevering treachery, no less than their folly, that lost the native princes their authority, though the moderation of Lord Hastings allowed them to remain civil governors, when he had taken out of their hands that military power which they continually perverted from its legiti-

¹ Wilson: *British India*, viii., 267.

² Prinsep: *Narrative*, ii., 66.

³ *Papers on Mahratta War*, 423.

mate purpose. Wisely employed, the sword is the minister of peace; but they made it the instrument by which innumerable wars were caused.

Holkar, stained with the blood of a double murder, had died in 1809; the last years of his life being passed in madness, alternating with intervals of reason. He was succeeded by Mulkar Rao Holkar, and this young prince remained to join in the hostile confederacy. His ministers continued to the latest hour, to send assurances of their friendship to the British Government. These may have been sincere, but they were unavailing. The soldiery of the state, fearing that their licentious bands would be dispersed in the event of an amicable treaty with the English, murdered the youthful chief's guardian—a woman distinguished as much for beauty and for talents, as for profligacy. They then, swearing allegiance to Mulkar Rao, gave battle to the English.¹

The Peishwa, Holkar, and Sindiah, accordingly stood openly together, as they had been previously united in their intrigues. They exhausted

¹ Malcolm : Central India, i., 316.

all their great powers in this last and glorious war. That war, however, crushed the only power which remained to contend with England for the supremacy of India; for the Mahratta Empire was annihilated by the same sword which smote down Hyder, Tippoo, the Great Mogul, and the other imperial lords of the East. The Peishwa, defeated, was in November, 1817, made captive and deposed. The Rajah was compelled again to surrender himself, and, being convicted of a new conspiracy,¹ shared a similar fate. Holkar ceded two-thirds of his territory, which was divided between some petty allied chiefs and the Company. Sindiah was thus in entire isolation, too weak even to support himself. Amir Khan, an Afghan soldier of fortune, who had risen from the command of a troop to the rank of an independent prince, and joined the Pindarrie hordes, was disabled by the scattering of his army, and the loss of all his guns.² The power of the Mahrattas was broken for ever. Nothing remained between the Indus and the capital of Bengal, except small states, either attached to

¹ Wilson : British India, viii., 353.

² Heeren : European States, ii., 394.

the English, or too weak to raise a standard against them.¹

Thus the most powerful and martial dynasty of India was annihilated. Little more than half a century had passed since two hundred thousand Mahrattas fought on the plains of Paniput; but their empire was now dissolved, and the conquests of fifty years were ratified on the banks of the Nerbudda.

¹ Hastings: Reply to Address in Calcutta, 1818.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONQUESTS FROM THE MAHRATTAS.

WHEN Lord Hastings attacked the Pindarries, he aimed at no territorial acquisitions. The territories wrested from them were restored to the princes from whom they had been ravished. When, however, the Mahratta chiefs took the field, conquest was inevitable.

A territory was set apart for the Rajah of Sattarah, enclosed by the Nira, the Khrisna, and the Warua Rivers, with the range of the Ghauts, and the district of Pandarpar. The remainder of the Peishwa's dominions, including an area of fifty thousand square miles, with a population of

four millions, became an integral part of British India.¹

The extensive province of Khandeish in the Deccan, was one of the most important of these acquisitions. There the traveller may count in one day's journey more than twenty fortresses. It was formerly populous and fertile; but Mahrattas, Arabs, Bheels, and Pindarries combined to desolate it. It came into our hands a desert—its towns in ruins, its villages destroyed, its soil uncultivated, its roads cut up, and myriads of its population swept off by famines, plagues, and battles.² It is now rising to prosperity; it is becoming more thickly inhabited; its numerous streams are once more fertilizing the plains; and while its fortresses decay, cities and hamlets flourish, for the vital spring of a people's happiness has been renewed.³

The ancient and celebrated city of Ahmedabad, once one of the largest capitals of the East, but then shrunk to an inferior town, was also acquired. The history of this place speaks in language above the art of logic to confute of the

¹ Wilson : British India, viii., 394.

² Hamilton, ii., 96.

Martin : India.

state of India under its native masters. Once it was enriched by a great trade in indigo, and by manufactures of steel, ivory, enamel, and mother of pearl; but of this all but a few traces had vanished. The ruins filled a circumference of thirty miles, but the standing edifices were now shrunk within five. Poonah, the modern capital of the Mahratta Empire in Aurungabad, the rich district of Koncan, in Bejahpur, and a portion of Kanara, were besides acquired from the Peishwa.

Holkar had possessed some districts in Khan-deish, which he ceded, with his territories in the Sathpura hills, and all he had conquered in the Deccan. Sindiah made atonement for the wars into which he had dragged the Company, by the loss of Ajmeer, the Indian Thrace, a country nearly three hundred miles in length and a hundred wide. Its sandy soil, its dismal aspect, its wilderness of barren valleys, promised no splendid advantage to a conqueror. Except the juicy Indian melon, which thrives most among burning deserts, it produces little for the sustenance of man. A scanty, scattered population of Jats and Rajpoots occupied its desolate tracts, building many fine cities, in which they long enjoyed

a partial independence. Neither Patan nor Mogul could completely subdue Rajpootana, though lying in the centre of Hindustan; but the Mah-rattas imposed upon it an oppression more systematic, more unremitting, and more brutal, than perhaps ever before trampled on humanity. Under them the natural sterility of the country was increased; the people fled from their peaceful occupations, took to the mountains, and lived as robbers, since they could not live as husbandmen or shepherds. When, however, British power was established in Ajmeer, though numerous tribes still retained their predatory habits, an evident change at once took place. Thousands came down from their retreats among the hills, occupied again their ancient, long-deserted villages, and improved the spare liberality of the soil. Security and comfort succeeded to misery and terror. Fields were once more turned up by the plough, which had borne no impress except the dint of horses' hoofs, and the reputation of Great Britain was extended by the tranquillity it bestowed on a region that had suffered so seriously under the scourge of war and famine.¹

¹ Elphinstone—Rennel—Prinsep.

Sindiah also relinquished several districts contiguous to Bhopal and Bundelcund. The Rajah of Nagpore made over his possessions in the eastern valley of the Nerbudda, besides Sumbhulpur, with its auriferous soil, and diamond mines,¹ and a wild tract spreading to Bengal and Orissa. These were all the acquisitions of actual territory, but a still larger extension of virtual empire was gained. The causes of war had been destroyed; new and wide fields of commerce had been opened up; and, above all, the populations of fertile and beautiful countries, hitherto made deserts by the coarse rapacity of despotism, were reclaimed from misery to enjoy peace and the fruits of industry under the vigorous arm of the Company's power.

Nevertheless, a considerable portion of Malwa still remained to the Mahrattas. Holkar was allowed to style himself chief of an extensive territory in the south-west, but Sir John Malcolm was in reality its governor. Under the care of that distinguished man, the country soon wore a happier aspect. Hundreds of deserted

¹ Grant.

villages were repeopled, the peasants ceased to carry arms with them when they went to plough, the revenue increased from four to fourteen, and in ten years to thirty-five lacs of rupees, and altogether a noble work of renovation was begun.¹ Until 1820, the Government was employed in the settlement of Rajpootana. By that period all its princes had acknowledged our supremacy, promised to aid us in case of need, and agreed to submit their mutual differences to our arbitration. Internally their peace was less effectually secured, the privileges of the chiefs being respected by sacrificing the rights of the people ; but, on the whole, a happier revolution never occurred in the fortunes of any region.

Three years afterwards, Lord Hastings quitted India. He carried with him from every-quarter the respect of the European, the love of the native population. In England he was welcomed with general applause, and his name derives lustre from a long series of honourable services. He conquered boldly, and he secured his conquests by wise administration. He justified his acts

¹ Wilson: British India, viii., 405.

before he achieved them, and afterwards he created from them occasions of milder but more glorious triumphs—the triumphs of civilization.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BURMESE WAR.

WHILE central India was settling into the enjoyment of tranquillity, the ingredients of a storm were compounding on the eastern frontier of the British dominions. It did not burst until some years had elapsed; but when Lord Amherst arrived as Governor-General in August, 1823, it had become inevitable.

East and south-east of Bengal, lay a region then entirely unknown to the English, who refrained from interfering in any of its affairs. There was the rich and powerful empire of Bir-mah, abounding in many valuable possessions, especially gold, silver, rubies, with amber of rare purity, and marble equal to the finest pro-

ducts of the Italian quarry, or the rocks of Pentelicus.¹ Its ancient capital was Ava, which has fallen into miserable dilapidation,² while the new seat of power—Amarapura, or the City of the Immortals, has risen within a circle of hills, and reflecting its beauty in the waters of a lake, exhausted the art and the wealth of the monarch, in its barbaric ornaments of costly metals.³ The province⁴ of Kachar, in Assam, was contiguous to the British district of Sylhet, and a number of petty, wild principalities divided our frontier from that of Birmah.

Conterminous on the north to the ancient dominions of Pegu, was the principality of Arracan, a fertile and well-inhabited country, which had succeeded in preserving its independence against the Mogul and the King of Pegu. Beyond this, from Tenasserim on the south, and northward to Assam, the King of Ava enjoyed supremacy; and in 1783, he conquered Arracan with Cheduba, Ramree, and the Broken Isles.⁴ He thus became the immediate neighbour of the

¹ Hamilton : Hindustan, ii., 769.

² Symes : Embassy to Ava, i., 187.

³ Canning.

⁴ Hamilton : Hindustan, ii., 802.

Company, though no intercourse that had hitherto taken place, led to the idea that this proximity would be one of friendship.

The oppressive government of Ava, reducing the people of Arracan to misery, soon drove them to rebellion; but unable to resist effectually, they fled in vast numbers to the borders of the Company's territory of Chittagong, where they settled on some unoccupied tracts. Some took to peaceful pursuits, others carried on from their place of refuge a predatory war against the usurpers of their country. As they came from the direction of our frontier, the Avan King imagined that we encouraged them, and were carrying on against him a covert war.

In 1793, three of the rebel chiefs being defeated, fled into the Company's territory; for our empire has ever been the refuge of such personages. Upon this the Burmese, without any notification of their design, invaded our frontier, and declared they would not withdraw unless the fugitives were given up.¹ The simple method of meeting this aggression would have been to drive their forces out at the bayonet's

¹ Wilson: *British India*, ix., 48.

point; but peace was preferred, and they withdrew, when the three chiefs, being proved to be guilty of the crimes laid to their charge, were delivered up. A friendly embassy was soon after sent to Ava, which ascribed this conciliating conduct to our fear, not to our magnanimity.¹

Just at the close of the eighteenth century, immense bodies of emigrants from Arracan, attracted by our beneficent rule, settled in our territory. Upon this, a new aggression was made upon our frontier, and though another settlement was effected, the King of Ava, in 1800, threatened us with an invasion, unless the whole mass of emigrants were driven back into his dominions. Of course, this was a demand to which no civilized government could accede. Nevertheless it was treated with a politeness which inspired the barbarous prince with an idea that the English feared him. Conciliation indeed, with an Asiatic power, never has any other effect. He treated our envoy disgracefully.² When an insurrection took place in Arracan against his viceroy's authority, he

¹ Buchanan : Account of the Frontier—Wilson.

² Bayfield : Historical Review.

chose to impute it to the Company's intrigues.¹ Again were efforts made to convince him of our friendly disposition. He laid an embargo on the British vessels at Rangoon, and continued making demands.² He threatened to pour sixty thousand men from the eastern mountains upon the levels of Bengal, to ravish from us fine provinces, and disgrace our name in all parts of Asia. To deliver up the fugitives, to cede Raum, Chittagong, Meershedabad, and Dacca, would save us from the displeasure of the high and mighty potentate of Ava. In this tone a correspondence was maintained. The Governor-General allowed his statements to be termed falsehoods;³ the public elephant hunters to be attacked; piratical tolls to be levied on trading

¹ Papers : Burmese War—Gov.-Gen. Jan. 21, 1812, p. 9.

² It will be perceived, that the spirit of the Burman Government then was precisely similar to that which animates it now, and that its conduct was characterised by equal insolence. If the British desire sincerely to enjoy tranquillity in Asia, and proceed without interruption with the works of peace, they will now annex, not alone the Delta of the Irawaddy, but the whole country from the sea to the mountains. Otherwise the King will be frightened, many of his subjects killed, our own blood wasted, our own treasure spent, and the Burmese will glory in seeing us once more evacuate their soil.

³ Bayfield : Historical Review, 36.

boats; fishermen to be fired upon; a pilot to be murdered, and universal consternation to be spread among the villages on the frontier.

These were disregarded, as well as other insults and encroachments, until the King of Ava was persuaded that the English were too weak, or too timid, to resist his aggressions.¹ This is always the case in the East. Native princes never ascribe anything to moderation, and this truth should be reiterated until it is stamped upon our invariable policy. The word is not in their language, the idea is foreign to their philosophy. If their insolence is not resented, they ascribe it to fear. The Burmese especially were full of arrogant hope. They compared their former triumphs with the achievements they had yet to accomplish, and because they had conquered Pegu, Arracan, Manipur, and Assam, dazzled themselves with the prospect of overcoming the Company's armies.² The idea had fixed itself in their minds, that the City of the Immortals was to become the capital of India, and that it was reserved for them to rescue Asia from the yoke of white men, and drive the invaders from her shores to the remote and lonely

¹ Wilson : British India, ix., 34.

² Cox : Burman Empire, 304.

island they were believed to inhabit.¹ Nothing but gunpowder could enforce conviction against this Chinese insolence, and even that was a temporary impression; because, at the end of the conflict, Burmah still enjoyed her original independence.

The final declaration of war did not come from the English. They waited until they were again invaded, so that the cause of this campaign is clear. It added to the British Indian Empire several valuable possessions:—Assam, three hundred and fifty miles in length, by sixty wide, a fertile valley, more abundantly watered than any other country in the world of equal extent. It has the costly minerals of the hills, with the vegetable wealth of Bengal; but was then in a condition so deplorable, so desolate, as to be utterly destitute of anything to attract a conqueror. One significant circumstance speaks eloquently of the Company's rule. Many of the cultivators, who possessed land in Assam, close to the British province, were accustomed to retire every night within the British boundary to sleep, and every morning to cross the river to

¹ Judson : Burmese War, 223—229—Wilson.

till their fields. In their independence, they enjoyed no security.¹ Arracan was also annexed, its viceroy flying to the capital of the humiliated sovereign, whom he had vaunted as "possessor of the whole world," and "king over a hundred kings." Tavoy was added, besides the Tennasserim provinces, rich in tin and timber. These tracts which had been almost depopulated by domestic anarchy and foreign despotism, have since enjoyed peace. The inhabitants are multiplying, and the jungle is disappearing under their hands. In Assam and Kachar new cultivations have been introduced, especially tea in the former. The Tenasserim provinces offer a similar aspect of renovation. Moulmein which, in 1826, was a cluster of miserable huts, is now a flourishing town. Arracan, which was then a waste, has become, under English rule, the granary of that region, and hundreds of vessels now crowd the ports of a country which, as an able historian observes, at the time of conquest, sent scarcely a fishing skiff to sea;² twelve hundred square-rigged ships, with innumerable country boats, sailing in one year from an

¹ Hamilton, ii., 748.

² Wilson : British India, ix., 161.

anchorage, then only visited by a stray fisher or a pirate; double the quantity of land cultivated, than was cultivated thirty years ago, and the population multiplied in equal proportion. These are the points of contrast, and palaces may rot without regret, if such are the monuments which succeed them.¹

¹ Professor Royle lately read, before the Asiatic Society, a valuable paper, in which he ably described the raw products of these, among other parts of India, and showed to what forms of industry the people had applied themselves, since peace had allowed them the opportunity.

CHAPTER XV.

SITUATION OF THE ENGLISH IN INDIA.

IT is easy to conquer, but difficult to consolidate an empire. In the East, a conqueror of good resources might range without limit, and finding everywhere enemies worthy to subdue, find nowhere one dangerous to attack. Arrayed against barbaric valour, the Roman discipline, the finished art, the concentrated force of European arms, could not fail of victory; but where religion, prejudice, customs, and all the pride of ignorance, contend against the influences of a foreign civilization, they may, without developing any marvellous genius, resist the forces accumulated against them. Besides, English soldiers are everywhere the same. If a

troop is raised, under whatever zone, it is a troop of steady, brave men; but politicians do not so abound. Perhaps India has educated more of them than any other subjugated region ever did; and this, in a considerable degree, because it has not been made that field for ministerial patronage to which the enemies of the East India Company are unconsciously endeavouring to reduce it. Its administrators are now educated to their duty; but once create an Indian office in Downing Street, and the adherents of a party, not the trained statesmen, who now develop its resources, will be commissioned to direct its concerns. There especially an intellect of imperial elevation can alone preside with success over the immense and varied population—with its infinite diversity of characteristics—which is included under our sway. Political critics who are accustomed to treat of every topic as it passes, find it easy to condemn the policy of statesmen in the East. They do not always consider the gigantic proportions in the task to be accomplished. To reduce chaos into order, and tranquillize a hundred struggling elements, to temper into one harmonious mass the varied ingredients of so vast a population, to encourage

prosperity out of confusion, and continue peace among innumerable millions of people accustomed to be roused from year to year, by daring, subtle, and unquiet adventurers, is to produce a great revolution, the work of much deep reflection, and of many a sagacious, powerful and combining mind. This is the duty undertaken by the East India Company.

It was long before the military classes of the Indian natives could be persuaded that the Company was actually to remain the paramount authority over them. They had not been inured to peace. Revolution was to them the habitual excitement of the hour, and they were long accustomed to anarchy. So much, indeed, had confusion been familiarised among them, that large bodies found in it their principal support, as well as pleasure.¹ They saw an order of merchants raising a treasure of wealth, in which they could hope for no share except in the midst of riot, and they were ready to fight for the smallest dividend of plunder. In the spoil and humiliation of the industrious people, they had always flourished, and turbulent, discontented

¹ Malcolm: Political History of India.

men, unaccustomed to the protecting principles of European rule, could not view with satisfaction the Government which was to purge the country from the profanation of fraud, violence, and bloodshed, which had been spread over it by its long succession of tyrants. The vicissitudes of the past gave to those factions hope in the future. Knowing of no durable dominion which had been built up in Hindustan, they expected at the outbreak of every war that the destiny of Asia would be accomplished, and the English driven from its soil.

At the commencement of the Burmese war—calamitous in its progress, though successful in its conclusion, the state of feeling throughout India was excellent. The people appreciated their happiness; yet there were many causes of disquietude. The same power which defended the natives against marauders, prevented them from marauding themselves, and hordes of military adventurers found their energies without a vocation. To those who have been accustomed to live by wrong, justice is the most intolerable of all tyrannies. For this reason, sedition cannot be extinguished, because the faithful subjects of a despotism will surely be the conspira-

tors of a free state. So it was in India. The friends of the old dynasties were enemies of the new. Under the fallen governments, they had plundered the country; now they were restrained, and therefore they were discontented.

Many points of administrative policy also had not been finally settled, and the system of government was in several of its parts incomplete. The heavy taxation, the ineffective police, the imperfect administration of justice, had not then been reformed. A spirit of dissatisfaction was displayed by various bodies of the people. It pervaded large classes, and these unfortunate sentiments found some adherents in all the provinces of India.¹ Nevertheless, the great mass of the Hindus were firmly attached to their new rulers, who found it easy to quench the rebellious spirit which kindled in various directions. Coercion, in some cases,² in others conciliation, extinguished the danger;³ but the details of these transactions belong to the general course of British Indian history.

While the sensation excited by the Burmese

¹ Shore: Notes on Indian Affairs, i., 159.

² Wilson: British India, ix., 169.

³ Graham: Bheel Tribes—Wilson, ix., 170.

war animated the hopes of malcontent leaders within our dominions, it inspired similar excitement throughout the rest of India.¹ There were many native Courts which had sought our protection, and acknowledged our supremacy, during the portentous dawn of the Mahratta war. Owing their security to British power, they forgot the obligation when the peril had ceased, and in the true spirit of Asiatic ingratitude would exact every service from an ally, and refuse to acknowledge any claim upon their faith or friendship.

¹ Metcalfe : Supreme Council.

CHAPTER XVI.

FALL OF BHURTPORE.

THE Rajah of the little state, formerly called Macherry, but now Alwar, died, and left two claimants for the succession. One was a nephew, the other an illegitimate son, and both were ambitious. Each had partisans, but appearing equally balanced, they agreed to a compromise. Beni Singh, the nephew, assumed the title; while to Bulwant Singh, the son, was assigned the real administration. He had been under the guardianship of Ahmed Khan, Nawab of Ferozepore, who was appointed to that honour by the English.

When the youths became men, they perpetually quarrelled, and much blood was shed during

the feud. In 1824, after a violent contest, which was promoted by intriguing factions, Bulwant Singh resigned, and left his cousin to enjoy undivided power. At this time an attempt was made to murder Ahmed Khan, and the criminal being taken, accused the minister of Beni Singh as his instigator. Ahmed Khan, having engaged, when elected to his Rajahate, to enter into no wars himself, applied to the English, his masters, for protection. They desired the Chief of Alwar, who was also subject to them, to apprehend the persons accused, and send them to Delhi for trial. At first he promised to obey; but speedily took the suspected individuals more closely into his confidence, and then boldly denied the right of the Company to interfere. An armed force was assembled to maintain this rebellious front. Negotiations were opened with the Rajah of Bhurt-pore, who was willing to join in the vain design of driving the white race out of India.

Bhurt-pore had long been dependent on the English Government; and Baldeo Singh, its late Rajah, had placed his son, Bulwant Singh, under their protection. They recognised the boy's claim, and invested him with the customary robe of honour. Baldeo Singh died in 1825, probably

by poison, and the young Rajah was placed on the seat of power, under the regency of an uncle. Within a month, however, Durjan Lal, his cousin, gaining over the troops, usurped the government, by one of those feats compounded of fraud and murder, through which despicable adventurers sometimes reach power. Sir David Ochterlony, who was British resident, declared that the rightful heir should be supported, and Durjan Lal was intimidated into a show of submission. He asserted it was only his object to be regent until the boy was grown to manhood; but he declined giving the necessary pledges of his faith, and Sir David prepared to do his duty by force of arms.

But he was checked. Shaken by the war with Ava, and fearing a storm which might pass the sign of battle from one enemy to another, until their empire was rocked upon its base, the British Government refused to uphold the young Rajah at the risk of hostilities. However this may be reconciled with the suggestions of expediency, it was inconsistent with the grand policy which had made them imperial in Asia, if it was not absolutely bad faith. They had known enough to learn that such conduct was never the seal of

lasting peace, but only the short delay of war. The sword, half drawn, was sheathed again, though a force was held in readiness to repress Durjan Lal, in case he infringed the Company's frontier.¹

Meanwhile, Durjan Lal, released from the menace of Sir David Ochterlony—for that distinguished officer and politician was dead—threw aside the mask, proclaimed himself Rajah, assembled troops to defend his usurpation, and intrigued with the neighbouring Mahratta and Rajpoot states, to unite with him against the English and against the rightful heir.² The ferment increased; bands of armed men were marching from every direction, to fight for plunder under the flag of the Bhurtpore chief; at last these menaces became so formidable that the Governors of India, adopting better counsels, consented to be faithful to the policy which had made them great. They commenced a new negotiation; it was cut short by an uncompromising denial, and war was proclaimed.

The pride of Durjan Lal rested amid the enormous ramparts of Bhurtpore. They had

¹ Wilson; *British India*, ix., 187.

² Auber: *British Power in India*.

once defied a British force; but batteries, mines, and the irresistible valour of another British army reduced them, and they fell. The affairs of the state were then settled under the Company's supremacy, and the Rajah of Alwar submitted to a power which had just crowned its long succession of triumphs by one of the most brilliant victories ever obtained.¹ This achievement had a salutary effect on the politics of the empire. The idea was widely spread that the liberties of India had a last citadel within the massive walls of Bhurtpore; that its battlements were to be the culminating point of our career, and that from its gates the tide of war was to be rolled back on us, until we once more took refuge on the sea. But all such visions were dispersed by the crowning success of this brief though important war.²

So much importance, let us repeat, had been attached to Bhurtpore, that it was viewed, even among the military classes of the conquered states, as a rallying point for every power not yet subdued; and it is certain that had the expedition failed, a universal hurricane of war

¹ See Creighton : *Siege of Bhurtpore*.

² Wilson ; *British India*, iv.

would have broken out over the length and breadth of Hindustan.¹

The progress of the British had now reached a point where campaigns could no longer be required within the limits of India. Powerful enemies they had none. In 1827, all the chiefs of Malwa, with the Mahratta princes, sent missions to the Government which they had once dreamed of destroying. Holkar was dead, and Sindiah died in the following March, leaving no wreck of the dominion which had formerly spread over the largest provinces of Hindustan, and bearing no malice against the stately power which had deprived him of it.² In the same year, also, the crown of Delhi was in name, as it had long been in reality, transferred to the Company; while the title of the King, acknowledged until now, was extinguished. The English put an end to the vain folly of acknowledging themselves vassals to a man who had lost every attribute of power, except its rapacity and pride.³

¹ Malcolm: Speech, 19th Dec., 1826.

² Stewart: Death of Sindiah—Wilson, ix., 212.

³ Auber: British Power in India, ii.

CHAPTER XVII.

POLICY OF LORD WILLIAM BENTINCK.

IN July, 1827, when the Earl of Amherst resigned, Lord William Bentinck succeeded him. The early part of his administration, however important in the civil and social history of India, does not lie within the scope of this inquiry. Fiscal retrenchments, revenue, judicial, and other reforms, were effected. A victory was next achieved more glorious than the military triumphs of two hundred years. The palaces of India had long been included under our sway; but the temples still remained secure. The soldier had been overcome, but the sacerdotal caste was yet to be subdued. Civilization now dealt a portentous blow against the barbarous institutions

of the East. The horrid sacrifice of women on the funeral pile where their husbands' ashes were consumed, was abolished. The humanity of Europe had long been shocked by reports of its atrocity—by accounts of young wives dragged resisting, and held down while the fire was applied; of children with their limbs bound, laid side by side on the flaming heap; of virgins not yet married but betrothed, dying in the embrace of an old Rajah's attenuated corpse. Thousands of these bloody devices of priestly craft had annually smoked on the borders of the Ganges, and murder, consecrated by religion, daily cried out against the superstition of India.¹ Moham-medans and Mahrattas had in central India discouraged the practice, which was formerly general among the Chiefs of Rajpootana;² but the Theban orgies of Bengal continued to prevail, until a law more powerful than the ancient code was established there. Suttee was declared a crime. Humanity was spared the sight of abominations which darkened the face of civilization in Asia, and have now become as rare as formerly they were frequent.³

¹ Ward : Description of the Hindus, iii., 308—Dubois, 240.

² Malcolm : Central India—Tod : Annals, i., 634.

³ Wilson : British India, ix., 276.

Another great undertaking was a crusade against those professional assassins, known as Thugs or Dacoits, who infested the public roads, and carried on war against society by means of atrocities not exceeded by any in the chronicles of human wickedness. There was no road free from them.¹ Now, though not entirely extirpated, any more than highwaymen in Great Britain, the Phansigars have been so far suppressed that travelling in India is safe.² Education, and the improvement of intercourse with Europe, occupied also the Governor-General's attention during a period distinguished as one of the most remarkable in the administration of British India.

The acquisitions made under the government of Lord William Bentinck were not considerable, but they were somewhat important. They consisted of Kachar, Jyntia, and Koorg. The first had been taken by the British during the Burmese war, but a native governor had been appointed. He was murdered by his own guard, and suspicion of the crime attached strongly to the Rajah of Manipur, who hoped to enjoy the

¹ Sleeman : *Rambles and Recollections*, i., 114.

² Wilson : *British India*, ix., 305.

succession, to which he had not the shadow of a claim. There was indeed no rightful successor, since it remained for the British to appoint one. As, therefore, the province had been miserably misgoverned, and as its whole population had again and again prayed to be accepted as subjects of the Company,¹ Kachar was forthwith annexed to their dominions, among which it has since flourished exceedingly.² It is a country of considerable extent, bounded on the north by Assam. Naturally fertile, it was thinly peopled and overgrown with jungle; for though its Rajahs had claimed to be among the children of the Sun, they were petty despots without the enlightenment which gives men the desire or the ability to govern well.³

Jyntia was acquired in a manner somewhat similar. In 1832, its Rajah died. His nephew, who was unable by himself to assert his claim, desired to be accepted as successor; but the British declined unless he paid a small tribute, and gave security for the maintenance of order. That they had a right to make these stipulations

¹ Wilson: ix., 325.

² Thornton: History of India.

³ Hamilton, ii., 763.

is perfectly clear. The province was dependent on them, and its late governor, by misconduct, had forfeited their favour. Four British subjects had been kidnapped to be offered as a sacrifice to the divinity whom he and his ancestors worshipped—the Goddess Kali. One escaped, but the others died on her bloody altar. A demand was made for the surrender of the persons who had been engaged in this murder. It had been evaded by the deceased chieftain, and when pressed upon the new claimant, he eluded it also. Since it was due to the people whom the Company had undertaken to protect, to defend them from such sanguinary outrages, the Rajah was punished by the sequestration of all the level country placed under his predecessor's authority. He then declared himself unable to control his subjects,¹ who were in a state of chronic rebellion, and desired the Company to relieve his cares, to give him an asylum, and grant him a pension. To this they acceded—no doubt with pleasure—and Jyntia was incorporated in the British possessions.²

In the Mysore, a spirit of moderation, which

¹ Wilson : British India, ix., 326.

² Thornton : History of India, iv.

was probably more liberal than wise, had created a native principality under a Hindu Rajah.¹ It flourished under its first governor, but under his successors fell into total anarchy, became yearly more deplorable, and, in 1825, was reduced to the last extreme of misery, when the English insisted, that a country in subjection to them should experience the benefit of some reform. This was occasionally procured, but the benefit was ephemeral; and the Rajah, instead of acting upon his engagements, wrung taxes from his unhappy people, until they rose in arms. This was repeated until Ram Rao, governor of one of the provinces named Nagur, or more properly Bednore,² drove the population into systematic rebellion. Then the flames of civil war burst forth over the country, and India beheld the shameful spectacle of a state, in the heart of the British Empire, devoured by the worst evils of intestine conflict. The Company, however, interfered, and restored peace; but the disaffection of the natives was so bitter and so universal, that they resolved not to commit the crime of forcing on them a ruler hateful to them all, and annexed

¹ Malcolm: Political History.

² Wilks: Mysore, i., 47.

the principality. This was in exact conformity with the treaty of 1799, which placed the Rajah in power; for his authority was explicitly made conditional upon his just and efficient administration.¹ It was to be taken from him if he failed to employ it well. A fifth of the revenue was assigned to the deposed governor; native officers were commissioned to carry on the government, and the signs of peace began to display themselves in the country.

This revolution in the affairs of a considerable state took place in 1833. In the same year, the small mountainous district of Koorg, lying between the plateau of the Mysore and Malabar,² exchanged its Asiatic for a European master. It was governed by a Rajah, who had for some time displayed unmistakeable symptoms of insanity. His most faithful followers were savagely butchered, the blood of his nearest kindred was shed by his own hands, which mangled the bodies of these victims with a ferocity exceeding that of the tiger in the Indian jungle. Hating the English violently, he had prohibited all intercourse with them, denouncing the penalty of

¹ Wilson : British India, ix., 348.

² Hamilton : Hindustan.

death, indeed, against any of his own subjects who left Koorg. His sister and her husband, however, whom he had threatened with this punishment, fled, and found refuge with the English resident at Mysore. Amicable overtures were then made to him. A British envoy was despatched to his petty Court. It was in vain. A native agent was sent, but was cast into prison. The duty of the Company, as the Imperial Government, which ought not to permit a madman, armed with power, to rage and revel in blood anywhere within reach of its forces, called for his deposal. The injury he had committed on our accredited agent, would in itself have justified his overthrow; but he added to these reasons.

It was discovered that he was secretly intriguing with the Rajah of Mysore against the British authority, inciting the native troops at Bangalore to treason, and plotting to murder the European officers there. The scheme was, indeed, desperate, insane, ridiculous; but the guilt of conspiracy is not measured by its prudence, and it is only futile where it is vigorously repressed. There is no reason whatever to doubt of his complicity in these transactions. The

insulting letters he had addressed to the Governor-General and several subordinate functionaries, with various other circumstances, left nothing of a dubious character with respect to his sentiments or designs. War was consequently declared against him; a severe contest followed; he was defeated; Koorg was annexed, and has ever since enjoyed peace, while its inhabitants have never attempted to throw off the yoke thus imposed upon them.¹

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PROTECTED STATES.

DURING the passage of these events, time tried the policy of the protective system. While the terror of the Mahratta and Pindarrie arms still reminded the inferior states of India that they were weak, they acknowledged with gratitude the defence they enjoyed. Afterwards, their arrogance returned, and evil feelings were rapidly engendered. Government also resolved to withdraw its influence within a narrow circle, and leave to anarchy the countries not included in its actual possession. In Oude, the Company's neutrality allowed disorganization to proceed and accomplish the last misfortune of its miserable people. In Hydrabad, the prince sank from

dependence to humiliation, while his territory decayed with equal swiftness. In Bhopal, the disputes of factions made the part of governor an office to be gambled away by the corruption of the military. In Gwalior, society decomposed every hour; throughout India, in a word, no state left to its native rulers prospered or was in tranquillity. The powerful government of Ranjit Singh and the republican federation of the Afghans maintained a better condition of things in the north-west; but their peace was the price of tyranny, and the British possessions were the only territories in the whole region which made progress in the arts and amenities of civilization.¹

It may not, however, be just to impute to the British Government blame for the forbearance they practised. They were not desirous of renewing war; they wished to avoid further conquest. They may thus have struggled against the destiny of Asia; they may have put off the deliverance of millions; they may have prolonged the anarchy of beautiful provinces and worthy populations in the East; but they were animated

¹ See Mackenna's excellent Sketch.

by exalted motives ; and if, when Lord William Bentinck resigned in 1835, he left a heavy debt against the future, justice must place him among the most honourable statesmen who have filled the viceroyalty of British India.¹

Meanwhile a great struggle took place in England, which effected a revolution in the East India Company, and put an end to its commercial existence. It had served a high purpose ; but the freedom of the seas was now inconsistent with the continuance of its privileges as a trading association. Three important episodes remain to connect that period with the present—the war in Afghanistan, the annexation of Sindh, and the conquest of the Punjab.

¹ Wilson : British India, ix., 474.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RAJAH OF SATTARA.

INCIDENTALLY, however, the Rajah of Sattara's deposition may be noticed, though to analyse the mass of controversial papers respecting it would be here out of place. The dethroned prince was Pertaub Siva, a descendant of Sevajee, who, in 1647, had created for himself an independent throne. When the British, in 1818, broke up the great Mahratta league, they took Pertaub Siva out of the prison in which the Peishwa had confined him, made him the nominal head of the Mahratta confederacy, and when the Peishwa was overthrown, set him up with a liberality equally improvident and ill-rewarded.¹ A treaty

¹ Sutherland : Princes of India, 132.

was made with him, reserving the right of military rule, as well as of civil administration in his country, and a resident was nominated to his Court. This functionary had under his control an armed force; but the Rajah, with that infatuation common among the believers in fatality, conspired to injure and affront the Government which had rescued him from a dungeon to establish him in a palace. Many circumstances attracted suspicion to his proceedings, and an inquiry took place. It was then proved that in distinct violation of the treaty to which he owed his power, he was habitually corresponding with various princes, some of whom were our open enemies; that he was fomenting hostilities against us; that he had attempted to seduce from their allegiance some of the Company's officers. He had for many years intrigued with the Portuguese at Goa, to engage them in an offensive alliance against England. They were to furnish him with an army; he was to reconquer the Mahratta Empire, and they were to be rewarded with abundance of treasure, or territory. The plan was indeed ridiculous, but his ill-will was no less clear or flagrant. Evidently weak in mind, he had long evinced signs

of derangement. He had drilled and armed a company of women, some of whom he appointed to the charge of artillery;¹ but had his follies ended there, no reference need have been made to them. But he tampered with many of our native soldiers, and when offered a new treaty of friendship, refused it. After a continued course of treachery, after new violations of his engagement, and after the clearest proof of his incapacity to govern, he was deposed.² The most eminent men in India were convinced of his guilt.³

The dethroned Rajah of Sattara employed agents in England—some native, others European—to create an interest in his case. Several true gentlemen also attached themselves to his cause, and spoke or wrote on his behalf, in the honest conviction that he had been unjustly treated.⁴ They discussed the question with no less temper than eloquence; but the professional advocates rejected no device of calumny which could be

¹ Lodwick : Letter, 13th Sept., 1836.

² Thornton, vi., 85.

³ Carnac : Minute, 30th May, 1839.

⁴ Joseph Hume, Esq., M.P. ; Colonel Sykes ; John Shepherd, Esq. ; John Cotton, Esq. ; H. St. George Tucker, Esq. ; General Briggs ; Major-General Robertson, of the East India Company.

levelled against the Government of India. British statesmen, civil servants of integrity and honour, were accused of suborning villains to perjury; of low plots which would discredit a forger; of fraudulent acts; of cowardly intrigues against a defenceless dependent. Colonel Ovans, as an example, was publicly described as an accomplice in the meanest crimes—Colonel Ovans who, as an Indian officer, a gentleman, and a politician, must have scorned from his soul the authors of this systematic slander. Great statesmen in England, whatever may be the shortcomings of their public policy, do not countenance acts of foul and petty wickedness, and their approval contradicts the charge. Had it been of a more manly nature, the historian might have turned aside to examine it; but since the truth is clear, the Rajah's agents may be dismissed without further observation.

CHAPTER XX.

FRONTIERS OF BRITISH INDIA.

BEFORE entering on an inquiry into the causes which led to the Afghan war, it will be interesting to describe the north-west frontier of British India as it existed in 1830; for this knowledge is necessary, if we desire perfectly to understand the reasons which made Indian statesmen look so solicitously to the politics of Afghanistan.

The north-western frontier was formed by the eastern branch of the River Indus—*Indus, incolis Sindus appellatus*¹—and the Runn of Cutch. The most westward point was Loodhiana, on the Sutlej, a hundred and sixty miles from Delhi. Along the frontier of the Bombay Pre-

¹ Pliny, iv., 20.

sidency ran a chain of outposts, consisting generally of a company or two of Sipahis and a troop of regular horse, stationed at villages from fifteen to twenty miles apart, who were efficient enough to meet the inroads of marauding tribes. Supplies and water abounded. In parts, a hilly, rocky surface; in parts, a dense mass of jungle; in parts, a maze of rivers, aided in the protection of our territory.

This line of frontier joined our dominion to Sindh, which on the west is separated by Beluchistan from Persia, and on the north by the Dudputer territory, which divided it from the vast tract inhabited by the Afghan race. The independent territories of Mairwara—now a British province flourishing in the promise of a new civilization—Jessulmir, and Bikanir, were the next countries conterminous to our possessions. They were also divided from Afghanistan by the Dudputer and the Punjab, which in the same manner lay as a bulwark between the Bengal Presidency and the divided but powerful states of Kabul.

The capital of that kingdom, adorned with the stately dedications of religion, pride, and wealth, was then no more than two hundred miles dis-

tant from the British frontier. If danger from any quarter threatened India, it was from those rocky heights, crested by ancient castles, which guarded the deep and tortuous passes of the Arachosian and Paropamisian ranges. All round its coasts the vast peninsula was effectually defended by naval squadrons; on the north-east, there was no enemy to fear; on the north, a vast and impassable chain shut out every danger; Kashmere, not only amid its southern passes, but towards the Caspian, was impenetrable to anything beyond a caravan; while westward, towards the sea, lay

“——palmy Indus, whose broad waters roll,
The verge of ancient traffic.”¹

Under these circumstances two objects of primary importance were presented to the statesman's view: first, the establishment of influence on a friendly basis at the Courts of Persia, Kabul, and the Punjab; two of these as countries whence invasion must proceed, the last as a most important auxiliary to either of the belligerents.

¹ Charles T. Browne: *Astrello*, a poem abounding in rich images, such as only a grand imagination could invent, and an eloquence which only genius could inspire.

Such an influence, while maintained in the ascendant, would render unavailing every hostile design on British India; as, before our frontiers could be approached, those countries would have to be overrun and subdued. This, supported as they would be by British aid, could not with any facility be achieved.

Second in importance was the necessity of procuring authentic surveys or memoirs of the lines of country considered practicable for the march of troops; the supply of water, the abundance of provisions, the convenience for carriage, the nature of the roads, rivers, and mountain passes, bridges, and defiles, and the disposition of the martial races which inhabited all parts of that elevated region. Besides these, every suggestion of political or commercial policy enforced the necessity of measures for opening up and commanding the navigation of the Indus.¹ This design has been selected as a favourite object for satirical animadversion; but, though its importance in the reveries of some sanguine politicals may have been exaggerated, a grave and sober judgment will allow that the value of such a

¹ Captain Bonamy: Memoir for Sir John Malcolm on the North-Western Frontier. *Unpublished.*

knowledge and such an influence could scarcely have been estimated too highly.

Since the possible invasion of India across its north-western frontier stands as one of the most prominent features in the subject of this inquiry, it will be interesting to occupy ourselves briefly with it, especially as valuable documents exist relative to the period we treat of, which have not yet been made generally public. It was demonstrated that Russia had long entertained, and had never abandoned, designs of aggression against our Eastern Empire.¹

This certainly was the popular impression in Russia. It was the constant and favourite theme of discussion in the imperial army. Potemkin and others had presented ingenious plans with reference to it, and every development of Russian policy in the East added weight to the conviction of this fact. It may be doubted whether any statesman of that Court ever contemplated the immediate conquest of our Oriental Empire; for independently of the dangers which must inevitably beset such an enterprise, no power, not supreme on the sea, could hold the Indian pe-

¹ See Lieut. Col. Evans: *Designs of Russia*.

ninsula for many years. But it is clear, nevertheless, that the Cabinet of St. Petersburg has continually had in prospect the approximation of Russian arms to our frontier, that she might increase the influence of her counsels in Europe. She might in this manner acquire the means to threaten and disturb our empire, to impair our resources, and, in the end, to undermine that spirit of content among the people, by which our authority is secured. Such an additional ability to injure would proportionably increase her preponderance in the balance of European power, and the acquisition of provinces in Afghanistan would offer employment for those predatory legions which, in great part, compose the armies on her frontiers.¹ Some theory of this kind, indeed, may be supposed to have incited her to claim dominion over some of those desolate tracts to the south of the "Heavenly Mountains," where battalions of her army annually perish amid glaciers, bare and arid plains and valleys, adorned only with sand-reeds, garlic and yellow jujube flowers, worthless in themselves. Such territories occupy a

¹ Sir John Malcolm: Notes on the Invasion of India. *Unpublished*

space in the map, and therefore content the avaricious ambition of Russia.

As, however, the advances of the Czar through the wilderness, bordering on China, may be supposed to form in his mind only a long vista, with Pekin itself at the end; so the tracts of Central Asia, and the passes of Afghanistan, are no more than steps to the accomplishment of a great design on India. One track of conquest proposed was through Khiva, up the Oxus, to Bokhara and Balk, to cross the Hindu Kush to Kabul, and thence proceed by way of Peshawur to Attock, Lahore, and Delhi. The subjugation of Turkistan would be necessary, and Kharism and Bokhara would require to be organized as principalities or pashalics of Russia. To conduct sixty thousand men, half Europeans and half natives, through this long career to their field of action in India, would require such a genius and such means as St. Petersburg has never yet commanded. The difficulty of holding in subjection the conquered tribes of those martial countries, of collecting supplies, of procuring boats, camels, carriages, horses, and all the aids which a civilized army require, would be an enormous, if not an in-

superable obstacle. It is erroneous to suppose that because a hundred thousand camels pay toll annually at the gates of Khiva, that number would be procurable; for it is not to be forgotten that a considerable proportion of them return more than once in the course of the year, and it is to be remembered, that a country must be completely subdued, with the people humbled, if not pacified, before its resources can be fully commanded.¹ That complete subjugation is not easily to be effected. The populations may not be organized, or formidably armed. Those which inhabit, indeed, the territories between the Caspian and Herat are actually poor, while Russia is rich. But the power of Asiatic countries to resist the invasion of a regular army depends less on their wealth than on their poverty. The want of resources, the unsettled character of the tribes, the irregular accumulation of stores, oppose effectually the attacks of disciplined forces. Ready to become for awhile the instruments of an invader, the nomade hordes are equally ready to turn upon him when a temporary purpose is served.

¹ Sir John Macdonald: Remarks on the Invasion of India. *Unpublished.*

An army safely established on the eastern shores of the Caspian, must traverse the sandy steppes between the Balkan and Kharism inhabited by martial shepherds. From Bokhara to Balk more than three hundred miles of bare, flat, dusty plains extend, sprinkled with the camps of the nomade people. Thence are forty miles, partly desert, partly cultivated, to Balk or Bactriana, which consists alternately of fertile sweeps of rich produce, of arid wastes, of low hills, and of valleys displaying a varied prospect of corn fields, vineyards, and fruit plantations. Here a brave, patient, hardy race exists, with fine cavalry, which would harass the most powerful army, and defend the ancient region, where even the fabled conquests of Semiramis ceased, and the Grecian princes built temples and palaces of marble. These, in their stately ruins, still adorn the desert capital of Bactria, bearing silent witness to the truth of history; but the Czar has no record to encourage his enterprise in the march of a Pharaoh from Egypt to this remote country, buried among the deserts of Asia, except an unintelligible sculpture, and the credulous fancy of a learned Theban lately busied in digging up the tombs of antiquity on the banks of the Nile.

If a Pharaoh did actually drive his chariot through so many deserts, ridges, and rivers, and penetrate to Bactriana, he possibly possessed more resources in warlike science than ever any Czar will command; but not to indulge in disputation on a topic more fitted for a council of historical antiquarians, we may proceed to lay down the projected route by which a Russian army might, it is considered, enter the British territories in Hindustan. From Balk to Kabul the road is difficult, and in all parts the disasters of the Khyber Pass would threaten an invading army. The Russians have not yet forgotten the losses of their six campaigns before the peace of Bucharest, their humiliation on the Araxes in their last struggle with the Shah, their dependence for food on the Georgian provinces, and the multiplied difficulties which they know would rise up around them east of the Balkan. Along the whole course of their march, one long guerilla warfare must be sustained, which would consume the flower of their army, dishearten it for further enterprise, and exhaust a great portion of its military stores. These considerations seem to discredit the idea that the Czar ever dreamed of marching, in regular equipage

of war, an invading army from the Caspian to the Hyphasis, and challenging the English to defend their empire where Porus and Taxiles had been overthrown by the Macedonian arms. It is true that the ancient forces of the intervening countries have disappeared; that no King of the Gangarides would now draw up on those rivers two hundred thousand foot, two thousand chariots, and twenty thousand horse,¹ to dispute the passage; but the natural obstacles remain, and a long era of barbarism has not created in the regions of central Asia more facilities to the scientific advance of Cossack or Tartar legions.

This does not presume, however, that the safety of India was not threatened by the designs of the Czar. The danger, if less imminent, was of a more serious character. Russia threatened to become possessed, in undivided enjoyment, of the resources of Persia. No opportunity was lost to establish a paramount influence at the servile Court of Teheran. This once accomplished, an army might easily be refreshed on the banks of the Indus, without an open menace of war to us,

¹ Quintus Curtius, ix. 11. Porus met Alexander with eighty-five elephants, three hundred chariots, and thirty-five thousand infantry, besides innumerable horses. Arrian Exp. Al. v. 15.

or an avowed project against our dominions. The Shah, reduced to a vassal of the Czar, might easily be persuaded to assail Afghanistan, and a formidable power might be created beyond the north-west frontier, which would perpetually threaten the peace of our empire.

¹ Sir John Malcolm: Unpublished Notes.

CHAPTER XXI.

AFGHANISTAN.

THE Persic Afghanistan is the country lying between Persia and India. It is inhabited by a martial race, but whether these were named "Lamentation," as an exiled tribe of Judea,¹ or from the descendants of Saul in Israel,² from the Copts of Pharaoh's army,³ or from the Jewish soldiers of the Arabian caliphs, or the Gaurian mountaineers,⁴ or the Gætic conquerors of Bactria,⁵ history does not decide; for their true origin is

¹ Malcolm : Persia, i., 596.

² Neamet Ullah—Thornton : Gazetteer, i., 4.

³ Ferishta's Mohammedan History. This curious work, of which the translation by General Briggs is a masterpiece of learning, abounds in allusions to very marvellous passages of history.

⁴ Mill : British India, ii., 257.

⁵ Masson : Travels, i., xiv.

unknown.¹ Their chronicles show, however, that they are a people which, if united, might be conspicuous among the bravest and most powerful nations of Asia.²

Including the rugged territories to the north-west, their country fills the whole space between Chittral, Kohistan and Kunduz, between Giljit, Yessen, and the petty states of the eastern hills, with the Indus, Bhawulpure, Sindh, Beluchistan, and Persia. Thus it has in parts a length of six hundred and sixty, and a breadth of five hundred miles. It is an elevated broken tract, with peaks from fifteen to twenty-one thousand feet in height, and deep valleys full of population. Four-fifths of the surface are mountainous and rocky; there are a few bleak, unfruitful table lands, whose scanty pasture feeds an occasional flock, and the rest is composed of valleys. These produce beautiful grain, and are adorned by the finest orchards,—peaches, apricots, nectarines, grapes, pomegranates, figs, mulberries, citrons, and other fruits, unsurpassed in beauty, abundance and flavour, throughout the world. Their fertility, indeed, is excelled in no part of

¹ Elphinstone : Kabul, i., 151.

² Foster : Travels, ii., 143.

India, and their climate is pleasant and salubrious. Gold, silver, copper, lead, antimony, zinc, and sulphur, abound. Whole hills are in places formed of rich black iron ore, while coal is believed to be plentiful.¹

A large proportion of the Afghan tribes are pastoral, and wool might become an important element of wealth, besides the fine soft hair of the mountain goat, celebrated as a material for shawls.² These fabrics, woven by the weavers of the valleys, are carried down in bales to be wrought in the looms of Dacca, receive brilliant dyes from the plains of lower India, and are prized all over the East as the garments of princesses and the beautiful girls devoted to please the sense of Oriental kings. Though anarchy has been the prevailing condition of the country, commerce has never ceased to be active—flowing in one direction towards Hindustan, in another through Kelat to Sonmeannée, in another to central Asia; and this trade might be developed to an indefinite extent, if the politics of the whole region were happily settled. The Lohanis alone, a migratory tribe, half traders, half

¹ Thornton : North West Countries, i., 16.

² Burnes : Wool of Cabul, 105—107.

shepherds,¹ lead annually hundreds of thousands of domestic animals with merchandize, to the delightful plains and rich pastures of the Kohi Damaun, proceeding in great numbers also to Dera Ismael Khan, and even to the mouths of the Hooghly, returning through the Derajat, and carrying supplies for traffic in the markets of central Asia.² If this system has flourished from ancient times—as it has, for the Lohani merchants were robbed by Baber three centuries and a half ago—notwithstanding every obstruction offered by barbarism and war,³ it is easy to imagine what a throng of commerce might fill the passes of Afghanistan whenever policy establishes it as the gate and citadel of British India.

The rude but acute and subtle Afghans³ have always been sufficiently powerful to excite alarm, and sufficiently exempt from the control of law to threaten the peace of their neighbours. Like India, their country has been frequently overrun, though never held long by rulers of one dynasty. Unable, however, to prevent strangers enjoying temporary triumph and supremacy over their

¹ Burnes : Report, 99.

² Vigne : Ghuznee and Kabul, 105.

³ Thornton : North West Countries, i., 27.

soil, they have continually invaded that of others. Their hereditary trade is war. Restless and enterprising, they early in the eighteenth century descended upon Persia, wasted it, spoiled its cities, and discrowned its Shah, at Ispahan. Driven out by the proud and impetuous spirit of Nadir,¹ they joined the Rohillas, and suddenly appeared in the cultured valley of the Ramgunga. Ahmed Shah, in 1747, was invested with the royal dignity at Kandahar, and reigning long and well, left a dominion which spread from Sirhind to Khorassan, and from the Oxus to the sea.² His feebler son was succeeded by Zemaun, who several times menaced India, and once carried his flags through the gates of the ancient capital of the Moguls. The danger indeed was only averted by the most courageous and skilful policy.³ It was shown by the whole course of these events, that a powerful leader, with genius to combine resources, without scruple to check his ambition, and animated by a disposition to ally himself with our enemies, might hold over our empire a peril even more formidable than the

¹ Mill: *British India*, ii., 453.

² Elphinstone: *Kabul*, 557.

³ Thornton: *History of India*, vi., 160

armies of the Mahrattas, or of Hyder Ali. To this development events appeared to tend when the Afghan war broke out. Examining the state of politics beyond Kabul, as far as Russia, we shall understand in what manner the dangers indicated grew up, and became obvious to the Governors of British India.

At the close of the eighteenth century, French intrigue was active in central Asia, and a close alliance with Persia was desired by English statesmen. In 1801 accordingly, a treaty was concluded. An envoy was at the same time sent to Sujah-ul-Mulk, an Afghanistan, who received him cordially, and engaged by a formal convention to shut the passes of his country against the encroachments of our enemies. The efforts meanwhile, which were made at the Court of the Shah to eradicate French influence, were continued, and at length that prince declared all treaties with European powers in hostility with us utterly null and void. Thus his kingdom was at that time closed against the invaders of India. The English on their part promised to subsidise him, and support his efforts on their behalf, and in 1814, a definitive compact was signed. "French intrigue" is a loose term

which does not satisfy every mind. It should therefore be explained. Napoleon had long sought to ally himself with Persia; he had despatched secret emissaries, inciting the Shah to attack the Turkish provinces on the Euphrates. These negotiations resulted in no actual operations; but in 1806, when Persia was at war with Russia, the Shah cordially welcomed a French envoy, and himself suggested an offensive alliance. He openly proposed to admit the passage of an army for the subjugation of India; he offered to exclude all Englishmen from his dominions, and the signs of preparation became visible all over the country.¹ The profligate peace of Tilsit changed the aspect of affairs; but an imperative necessity for action remained.

The treaty bound us not to interfere in the domestic affairs of Persia, or by any intrigues or encroachments to injure its power. It was announced as a purely defensive arrangement, and the annual subsidy of two hundred thousand tomauns was to be paid in case of invasion by a European power, to be applied only to the purposes of the war, and not to be demanded if

¹ Wilson, vii., 221.

the Shah was the aggressor. He engaged to attack the Afghans, should they attack the English; but in case of war between them, the Company was not to interfere, unless invited by both as a mediator. Other stipulations of friendly conduct were added, and lastly it was agreed that a British naval force should serve the Shah in the Gulf, at his own expense. This treaty continued in effect until 1828, when Persia was engaged in a disastrous war with Russia, while English influence continually declined at Teheran.

CHAPTER XXII.

RUSSIA AND THE EAST.

No topic has been more violently discussed than that of Russian progress in the East. It appears to be admitted that, if her designs were directed upon British India, it was not only just, but absolutely necessary, that the diplomacy, or the arms of Great Britain should raise up a barrier against them. History has been written to little purpose if it has not proved that Russia has an ambition which no success can satisfy. No principle has guided her advance, no scruple has regulated her policy, no humanity has impeded her march. Exiles perishing on the banks of the Kuban, agents corrupting the subjects of the Porte, military tyrants bleeding to death

the people of Hungary, a standing army always in the attitude of war encamped in Bessarabia, an influence insinuated into every state of Europe, these are the signs of her further purpose. In sixty years her frontier was advanced from the Don and the Volga to the Aras, and her influence spread from the Aras to Afghanistan.¹

Treaties have intervened, but she has passed them over. They are powerless to check her ambition. She stretches the parchment on which they are inscribed into drums, on which to animate her Cossacks to battle against Persians, or Tartars, or Circassian mountaineers. In contravention of explicit compacts, she held the castles on the Black Sea against the sense of Europe. She seized Imeretia, Gurriel, and the Mingrelian principality; she subjected to her authority the Khans of Khirvan, of Cheky, and of Charabagh; she secured by the treaty of Akerman the forts she had previously held without a treaty on the Black Sea; Erivan and Natkhivan fell into her hands, a province of the Alkalsikian Pachalic, with Abazia and the Circassian districts—all these effecting changes

¹ Progress of Russia in the East, ix.

more or less serious, in the distribution of power among some of the European nationalities, and of independence among others. Yet, it is in her character to complain of British policy in Sindh, though while that country has flourished in ten-fold happiness since its occupation, every territory gained by Russia is lost to civilization.

The conquests of Russia are like the devastations of the plague. Her arms visit nations as a pestilence, and if they make peace, it is where they have made solitude before.¹ They are not like the legions of Rome, which civilized whom they subdued; not like the hordes of Scythia, which yielded to the arts of the polished race they conquered;² but, like the sea, which obliterates every trace and monument of civilization. They have built dungeons for slaves, palaces for despots; they have governed the servile with whips, and the liberal with swords; they have led, at their chariot wheels, a few men of intellect or letters, to adorn their barbarous triumph; but they have learned no virtue from the one, and no refinement from the other. When, therefore, their influence increased in Persia, it was the

¹ Solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant.—*Tacitus*.

² Thornton: History of India, vi., 103.

mingling of a Gothic with an Oriental barbarism. It did rapidly grow up, for every battle increased the strength of the one, and diminished the resources of the other. Finally, the Russians amerced Persia in an enormous fine. The English had long seen the futility of paying their heavy subsidy to the Shah. They desired to discontinue it. How they justified this resolution is not generally stated by writers; nor is it, perhaps, known to them all. The lavish sums bestowed on the Court of Persia, expressly for no purpose but that of maintaining its defence against European aggression, were discovered to be fraudulently misapplied, devoured by worthless ministers, and expended on every other object except the just one.¹

A proper occasion was now presented for relieving the British treasury of this fruitless burden. The English proposed to pay the Shah's Russian debt, if he would amend that article of the treaty by which they engaged to subsidise him, as well as that respecting the Russian frontier. He reluctantly consented.²

¹ Sir John Macdonald : Unpublished Notes.

² Thornton : History of India, vi., 107.

The connection of Persia with Russia is of old date. Peter sent an embassy to the Shah, and, under pretence of aiding him against some rebels, seized several fine provinces of his kingdom. When Peter died, the fortunes of the state had almost closed, and the ancient dominions of the Sophy dynasty were divided between the Afghans, the Turks, and the Tartar legions of Moscow. Nadir, however, who to a merciless heart, united a mind of splendid capacity, rose between the spoilers of his country, drove them all from their usurped possessions,¹ and became master of the whole region to the foot of the Caucasus. On his death the Russians again seized Georgia, and continued in a long course of wary and cowardly intrigue, until Persia was almost ruined under their influence.

The English were alarmed. They had already learned from the past to doubt the future. Secure as their empire seemed, they knew of nothing to prevent the councils of St. Petersburg ruling not only the councils of Teheran, but those of Kabul and Kandahar, which might lead to a strange apparition in the Punjab and the

¹ Progress of Russia in the East, 18.

valley of Kashmere. They had seen the petty state of Muscovy, long unrecognised in the balance of Europe, advance to the front rank of nations, and the influence which had spread from the Volga to the Caspian, might extend from the Caspian to the Indus. She had acquired from Sweden half its territory, from Poland tracts nearly equal in size to the Austrian Empire, from Turkey in Europe almost as much as the Prussian kingdom, from Turkey in Asia little less than all the smaller states of Germany together; from Persia provinces as large as England; from Tartary an area equal to that of Turkey in Europe, Greece, Italy and Spain combined. Who, then, could examine the political map of the world, and draw the line where Russian encroachment was to cease? Who could point out in the history of her progress the action of any principles which would prevent her pushing forward until her frontier was contiguous to our own? And who could show in Persia any elements likely to oppose this silent but absorbing tide of aggression?

In Afghanistan, therefore, there was the only barrier against the encroachments of such a

power. There the course of events admitted a choice of policy ; for history imposed no obligation on the English towards any of the reigning powers. The revolutions of the country had made every ruler an usurper.

Timur, son of Ahmed, was succeeded by Zeman Shah, his younger son, who put out the eyes of his elder brother Humayun.¹ He at length yielded to another elder brother, who inflicted on him a similar cruelty. Mahmoud, the next King, was shortly deposed in his turn by a brother, Sujah-ul -Mulk, who, however, refrained from blinding his fallen rival. This unusual clemency was not rewarded with equal generosity. Mahmoud escaped from prison, dethroned Sujah, and drove him into the Punjab. There Ranjit Singh, the able monarch of the kingdom of the Five Rivers, welcomed him, and robbed him. He then put himself into the hands of the English, by whom he was liberally entertained.²

Mahmoud, however, owed his success to the genius of his minister, Futteh Khan; but the gratitude of Oriental princes is of short duration. His son, Kamram, becoming jealous of the

¹ Elphinstone : Kabul, 599.

² Hugh : Narrative, 399.

Wuzeer, obtained consent that he should die; and Futtch Khan was hewn to pieces at the foot of the throne he had aided to erect. The brothers of the murdered man, already rebellious, then rose in arms, were victorious, and divided most of Afghanistan between them. Mahmoud fled to the principality of Herat, where he died, and was succeeded by Kamram.

The ablest of the brothers of Futtch Khan was Dost Mohammed, who, by means of activity, villany, fraud, and courage, obtained great power. His only right was that of usurpation, and his only means of upholding it was the sword. Unable to crush the ambition of the other chiefs of his house, who continually agitated against him, he carried on a bloody civil war, and Afghanistan in 1836 was reduced to anarchy the most complete. Shah Sujah made two attempts to recover his crown, but without success; while Ranjit Singh availed himself of the confusion to seize the fertile district of Peshawur.¹

¹ Thornton : History of India, vi., 124.

CHAPTER XXIII.

INTRIGUES IN AFGHANISTAN.

ON the other hand, Persia, moved by the influence of Russia, laid claim to Afghanistan. The Shah urged the ephemeral conquests of Nadir, the concessions of Kamram, and other demands. But Kamram himself, when Abbas Mirza died, and was succeeded by a weaker prince, broke his engagements, and was the enemy of Persia when she laid claim even to Kandahar and Ghuznee. He had given full justification for war against him by acts contrary to every law of justice; and this was not denied by the politicians of Great Britain.¹ But it was clear that the opportunity was one long waited for.

¹ Ellis: Correspondence, Jan., 1836.

It had, while Abbas Mirza was alive, been foreseen that at his death such a movement would be made.¹ Therefore, when the Shah levied siege against Herat, all statesmen knew that this was simply one stage in the progress towards our frontier. When the Persian standard was raised, Russian gold paid the army which marched behind it, and the Afghan principality was viewed as nothing more than a gateway to India. Russian despatches indeed disavowed all share in the war; but Russian diplomacy is now understood. There are two sets of letters circulated between the Czar's government and its emissaries abroad—one for the world, and another for the cabinet—and the purpose of these, in the present instance, was to promote the siege of Herat.²

The siege of Herat is described as a contemptible burlesque, which could excite no alarm in the minds of sober politicians. Forty thousand men, however, with seventy guns, are not a contemptible vanguard when the impulse is given by Russia. Nine months, indeed, were occupied in the abortive siege; but the miserable, half-starved

¹ Sir John Malcolm : Unpublished Notes.

² Thornton : History of India, vi., 136.

rabble¹ were not so poor in spirit as some imagine. Dost Mohammed himself, who never feared small dangers, trembled before the tide which threatened to overwhelm him.² The besiegers met a desperate resistance. A British officer disciplined their valour; yet three times the Persian standards were planted in the breach where the Afghans with invincible courage drove them back, amid tremendous slaughter.³

The British Government perceived that these events, which seemed only to concern the Princes of Afghanistan, concerned deeply the interests of England. Therefore, to secure the passes against their enemies, they, in 1837, sent a mission to Kabul, where Dost Mohammed had a powerful army,⁴ but was hated by numbers of the people.⁵ Captain Burnes arriving in the capital, found it a hotbed of Persian and Russian intrigue. Communications were circulating between the various powers, and especially between Count Nesselrode's agents and the Khan, who applied to Russia for

¹ Macfarlane: *Sketches of Indian History*, 528.

² Macfarlane, 529.

³ Mackenna: *Continuation of Taylor*, 372.

⁴ Hugh: *Narrative*, 289.

⁵ Masson: *Travels*, i., 9.

support. It was clearly seen that the Czar was promising him assistance against Ranjit Singh, for a war was then raging furiously with the Punjab.¹ This had long continued. Great battles had been fought, with portentous carnage, and it was feared, not without reason, that the hatred of the Mohammedans to the Sikhs might at length produce a commotion on our frontier which would agitate the inflammable Muslim population all over India.²

Dost Mohammed had frequently sought alliance with the English, but now that the overtures came from them he refused. They desired, of course, to establish their own influence in Afghanistan, as a measure of defence. The Russians could have no such reason. No one feared that the Company would invade her from India, while no proof was wanting that she aimed at disturbing the security of our Eastern Empire. "With the one it was defence, with the other aggression."³ Again an envoy from Count Nesselrode came to Kabul, commissioned

¹ Correspondence, 6.

² Papers, 38, 39.

³ Thornton: History, vi., 129.

to offer the Dost assistance in money against Ranjit Singh.

In Persia, meanwhile, British influence was extinguished. Our countrymen were insulted and attacked, which produced a rupture, and led to some hostile operations in the Persian Gulf. This circumstance added significance to the symptoms displayed at Kabul. Captain Burnes could not promise an army to attack Ranjit Singh, and consequently failed in his mission. The Russians, therefore, had been triumphant, first in Persia, and next in Afghanistan.¹ Their third diplomatic victory might be achieved in Lahore. What projects lay beyond it is impossible to know; but men do not conquer deserts without looking for further rewards. Russia had no frontier to protect, and if she coveted the control of the rocks and mountains on the north-west of India, is it to be imagined she had no hopes of encamping on the richer plains below?²

The question then remained, shall the citadel of India be given up to a power which avows its purpose of creating a religious war on our north-west frontier, which has planned the invasion of

¹ Burnes to Auckland, Dec., 1837.

² Macneill to Palmerston, 1837.

our dominions, and everywhere throughout the world is confessedly our rival, if not our enemy? This was the interrogation Lord Auckland put to his own mind, and with the decision of a statesman, he resolved, at whatever cost to himself, to accomplish his duty.

Among the maxims of wisdom and virtue, not one is more irremoveably fixed than this, that no political advantage ought to be gained by a sacrifice of justice. But when a great policy may be achieved without dishonour, it is creditable for a statesman to arm himself with the contingencies of other men. This was fairly, distinctly, and broadly explained by the Governor-General. Treaties had been concluded with various governments to facilitate the commerce and extend the legitimate influence of England in central Asia. With a view to perfect the design of those treaties, the *de facto* rulers of Afghanistan were invited to join. Dost Mohammed, however, made an unprovoked attack on our ancient ally, Ranjit Singh, which threatened to shake the foundations of peace in India. Persia also laid siege to Herat, intrigues circulated throughout the whole region; the ambition of the Shah, inspired from the vaults of

the Kremlin, displayed its aim of passing the Indus. British officers in his territories suffered insult and persecution, and the treaty of alliance was broken in many respects.

Persia was, therefore, in declared hostility to Great Britain. Dost Mohammed openly joined Persia. Our envoy left Kabul. All things conspired to endanger our frontier, and the combustion threatened to spread within the provinces of our empire.¹ Intrigue and aggression rapidly advanced; and it was for the Governor-General, consulting the honour and the safety of the splendid trust committed to his charge, to resist before resistance was forced upon him, as the appeal of despair to fortune.

He saw Shah Sujah struggling for his throne. He knew that his right to it was at least as good as that of any other pretender, successful or otherwise, and it was a simple question of policy whether or not to embrace his cause. Where two parties are contending, it is just for a third, whose interests are involved, to assist one against the other, provided that no existing compact binds it to neutrality.²

¹ Simla : Proclamation, Oct., i., 1837.

² Vattel : Law of Nations, iv., 2—14.

The family of Futteh Khan had no legitimate claim. They had been treated as sovereign princes by the English, but a usurpation in a neighbouring country may always be tolerated, while its existence is not dangerous. The Shah had at least a better claim than the Dost or his brother, for he was of the ancient ruling dynasty. Hereditary right, however, may be put out of consideration. None of the pretenders were legitimate, and where there is no legitimacy, there can strictly be no usurpation. Alexander and Nicholas in Russia, and Louis Philippe in France, ascended their thrones upon titles similar to that which Shah Sujah-ul-Mulk possessed.¹

¹ Thornton : History, vi., 144.

CHAPTER XXIV.

POLICY OF LORD AUCKLAND.

INFORMATION received by Lord Auckland described Dost Mohammed's throne as much shaken by anarchy. He was himself far from beloved by the people.¹ He was feared, and though the lower classes respected his power and were grateful for his protection, the chiefs hated his authority and despised his character.² Nevertheless, the unpopularity of his brothers might have enabled him to extend his influence, had he been contented, as it was once supposed, to share it with Shah Sujah. It was common among the Afghans to exclaim, "How happy

¹ Masson, i., 9.

² Masson, iii., 15.

should we be, if Sujah were king, and Dost Mohammed his minister.”¹ The advice of a traveller considered reliable was to restore the Shah, if possible by peaceful means; for he considered that the English could interfere without offending half-a-dozen people in Afghanistan.² If, therefore, there was no injustice in embracing the cause of Sujah-ul-Mulk against the pretensions of Dost Mohammed, the question is reduced to one of policy. There was danger in the rapid approach of a hostile influence towards our frontier. Afghanistan alone could be set up as a barrier against it. We had offered a friendly treaty to the last usurpers, which they had refused, preferring the alliance of our avowed enemies. The expelled prince was ready to enter into our views, and was recommended by reports of his popularity. The Governor-General, accordingly, resolved to restore him—not, of course, on his own account, but to suit the purposes of Great Britain. It serves no end to conceal the spirit of this transaction. The army raised to recover for Shah Sujah his lost throne, was in reality intended for the conquest and

¹ Masson, i., 253.

² Masson: See Papers, v., 19—22.

occupation of Afghanistan. To fight under the flag of an ally who desired our aid was wiser than to proclaim at once a scheme of direct subjugation. This maxim has been the principle of action with every nation which has risen to the summit of power, since Alcibiades announced it to the Athenians. "The ready road to empire is to succour those who implore our protection."¹ The war in Afghanistan was a speculative war; but not in anticipation of dangers undefined and far remote, but of a menacing combination close to our frontier. It is by some regarded as a violation of our treaty with Persia; for we had engaged not to interfere between that country and Afghanistan. But all our relations were changed. The Afghan Empire had been divided into many states, of which Kabul and Kandahar were not at war with Persia. Indeed, the Shah was bound to aid us against them, unless he pleaded that the compact was dissolved, by which we were in the same manner released. But he was now our enemy, and no alliance existed between his government and ours.²

It was upon these conditions that the British

¹ Thucydides, ii., 111.

Thornton: History, vi., 146.

Government determined to crown the Shah once more Lord of the Passes in Kandahar, Ranjit Singh was invited to join the league, and in 1838, a tripartite treaty was concluded.

The episodes of that disastrous war cannot here be described. It was a varied series of triumphs the most brilliant, and disasters the most gloomy. Improvidently commenced and inefficiently conducted, it was, nevertheless, successful at its beginning. The objects were explicitly declared. Ranjit Singh, ruler of the Punjab, was recognised in the possession of all the territories he had acquired, but bound to co-operate in the great designs of the war. A guaranteed independence was resolved to be offered to the Amirs of Sindh, though on terms favourable as well to the British Government as to them. Herat was to be left in the undisturbed possession of Kamran. Shah Sujah-ul-Mulk, levying an army of his own, was to receive the assistance of a British force, until his dominions had been tranquillized, and the ancient throne of Afghanistan secured.

In February, 1839, General Nott first led an English army across a bridge of boats to the opposite banks of the Indus. There, on the 14th,

our colours floated in the midst of an animating scene; for fortresses of rock and masonry, long vaunted to be impregnable, were in prospect to try the daring and the skill of an army flushed with hope. In March, the whole force assembled at Shikarpur, the most populous and commercial town in Sindh, famous for the credit of its merchants,¹ though reduced far towards poverty by the miserable rule of the Amirs.² Thence they marched through a wild, impracticable country towards the Bolan Pass, the great communication between the valley of the Indus and Khorassan, where they suffered much from the flying attacks of the Beluchis—a lawless, treacherous, sanguinary race, who may be described as pirates of the mountains.³ In that pass, a hurricane of snow, the guerilla descents of the marauding tribes, and scarcity of water, increased their difficulties; but on the 25th of April, Kandahar was entered with all the pomp of triumph. There, in the ancient capital of the Duranis, which had fallen in successive ages before the arms of Tamerlane, of Baber, of Shah Abbas, and

¹ Burnes : Commerce of Shikarpur, 24.

² Thornton : North West Countries, ii., 193.

³ Leech : Sindhian Army, 90—Atkinson, 113.

of Nadir, where the tomb of Ahmed and his twelve children adorn a city made desert by oppression, the old monarch was once more installed King in Afghanistan, amid salvos of artillery and the cheers of seven thousand five hundred British soldiers.

Towards the end of June, the army of the Indus arrived before Ghuznee—not to be so easily occupied. Its gates were blown in; the approaches to its citadel were won inch by inch against a desperate legion of defenders; but skill and courage prevailed, and the folds of the British standard were flung from the ramparts of one of the strongest fortresses in Asia. Thence the army advanced to Kabul, along a rich, cultivated valley; the capital was occupied; Dost Mohammed was driven to flight, and the victorious sovereign saw himself, in the full flush of triumph, master again of all his old dominions. The army of the Indus, after a march of more than fifteen hundred miles, sat down under the Bala Hissar; Khelat was captured, and the British forces withdrew through the passes of the Khyber.¹

¹ Kaye: History of the War. Mr. Kaye has presented us with

Then commenced the miserable disasters of the war. Instead of occupying the strongholds of Afghanistan—the mountain forts, the passes, the defiles and walled cities—our army had withdrawn, and that long series of misfortunes followed, too familiar to the English reader. It is a painful narrative for an Englishman to read. Though Shah Sujah was restored, he was not established on his throne. Fanatic factions stirred the populace against him; Dost Mohammed laboured to obtain the assistance of the Russian forces marching on Khiva; the hill tribes continually descended, and a general confederacy was formed to expel the English, with the prince whose cause they had adopted. The outbreak and massacre at Kabul took place; the city was evacuated; the whole policy of the war was reversed; the ten thousand perished among the rocks; Shah Sujah died under an assassin's hand, and the British nation was disgraced in Asia.

Lord Ellenborough succeeded Lord Auckland.

a very valuable and ably written work; but so far as the policy and justification of the war are concerned, does not appear to have exposed any new phases of it. Of its conduct, however, he has afforded a view which all future historians must consult.

Twice President of the Board of Control in London, his lordship was by the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel considered eminently qualified for the great charge now placed in his hands. His government, indeed, retrieved the shame which had fallen on our arms; but his policy completed our humiliation. Dost Mohammed was permitted to regain his throne, and the splendid victories under General Pollock, which planted our flag again on the ramparts of Kabul, which revived the brilliance of our sullied fame, and made us masters of Afghanistan, were followed by a retrogressive march, which British soldiers must have been ashamed to make. What came of all the grand policy shadowed forth in the Simla proclamation? Herat submitted to the King of Persia; the English, instead of consolidating their influence, and extending their commerce in Afghanistan, retreated from its borders, and were mocked from its capital city; Shah Sujah, the monarch of their hope, was assassinated; the Dost was once more crowned; the chiefs whom the British Government had persuaded to join its cause, were surrendered to punishment or persecution; the ascendancy of Russia became apparent in central Asia, and the

mission of Vicowich made a commentary on the mission of Alexander Burnes and the counsels of Sir John Macnaughten.

That was a disgraceful episode in British Indian history, and the Governor-General, with the promoters of his policy, must consent to bear the reproach of having sacrificed at once our honour, our interests, and our future peace in a country which, as the north-western gateway of India, will inevitably menace us with danger until a new war achieves what might then have been accomplished with comparative ease. The blood of the soldiers should have been too dear to him to be spent in barren fields; for the battles in Afghanistan, glorious as they were, brought no advantage to us. The policy of Lord Ellenborough sacrificed what his generals and brigadiers had won. All the treasure expended, all the life wasted, all the great efforts made, all the long course of negotiation to protect our empire against its most formidable enemies, ended in the evacuation of Afghanistan, with the parading through India of the announcement that treaties were not binding when they led into danger, and that the British Government was too weak or too timid to vindicate its reputation. Lord

Ellenborough bore away no trophy except a pair of sandal-wood gates. He was indeed thanked in Parliament; he was eulogised by men who were responsible for intrusting him with the power he had used for our humiliation; but the judgments of history are not decided by the acclamations of a day.

It is not agreeable to censure the past acts of a living man, who is known for his private virtues. But a writer must be candid, or he must not speak at all. In Afghanistan, Lord Ellenborough, as I think, injured the reputation and sacrificed the interests of Great Britain. Had we been weak, it might have been wise to recede; but a great state is too much dreaded, and should be too proud, to seek for safety in humiliation. What mattered it that we flaunted our standard through the passes, that we bore away a pair of wooden gates, which were presented to all the Hindus and native princes of India in a strain of eloquence familiar to the House of Peers; that we cut down the mulberry trees; that we avenged the blood which was spilled at Istaliff; that we dismantled the Bala Hissar, that we destroyed its glittering bazaars, that we defaced its

beautiful mosques, wasted its gardens, and spoiled its famous groves? The bloody chasm in the ranks of our Indian army was not repaired. We evacuated the country. The Afghans saw us retreat, Dost Mohammed regained his throne, and our conscious weakness was exposed to every government in Asia. If the second campaign in Afghanistan was just, it should have been one of conquest. The havoc it made was not worth one man's blood—blood well shed for the defence of India, but ill expended if only to revenge a disaster. Such an achievement is the work of vanity and crime. Misfortune makes some men cowards, but our humiliation in Afghanistan was perfected after a career of victories; we struck the blow, and fled, because Lord Ellenborough was not prepared to complete our triumph. Exulting in the prospect of redeeming their flag from disgrace, our soldiers had penetrated the rocky gates still stained with the recent slaughter, scaled the Afghan mountains to their summit, and wasted their prodigal valour against tribes among the most warlike in the East—had seen the flight of a nation, had fattened the valleys with their blood, and then gone back in the pomp

of triumph but the posture of defeat, to expose the truth that the British Government of India was able only to retaliate an outrage, without possessing the courage to hold what it had acquired.

CHAPTER XXV.

POLITICS OF SINDH.

A SINGULAR good fortune allowed Lord Ellenborough the opportunity to balance one great act against one which was disgraceful. He used the occasion with an honourable promptitude, which well redeemed his fame.

One of the most extensive and important countries of Western India was Sindh, lying between Beluchistan, Afghanistan, and Bhawulpur on the north—an extent of three hundred and eighty miles. Along the sea coast it is a miserable lowland, perpetually swamped, but large tracts of the country are fertile, and might be enriched to any degree by cultivation. Sindh is, indeed, remarkable for the abundance of its

natural resources; but misgovernment continuing for a long period, depopulated its finest provinces, which, under a wasting tyranny, relapsed into the desert.¹ The volume of the river, its regular floods, the fertile soil, the nature of the port of Kurrachee, render it the rival of Egypt; while its water communications with the Punjab and central Asia, give it still more importance—especially when delivered from the yoke of intolerant sectarians, who fiercely persecuted all who refused to participate in their superstitions.²

In antiquity, Sindh was, it is said, a kingdom of great power, but fell early before invaders. It was conquered first by the Muslims of Damascus, then by the crusaders of Persia. It was next a tributary to the empire of Ghuznee, and after many revolutions, became an appendage of Kabul. A Beluchi tribe was dominant, and in 1800, the country was divided under several brothers of that race, who styled themselves Amirs, or Lords of Sindh. One division of the family ruled in the upper, another in the lower country,

¹ Thornton : North West Countries, ii., 218.

² Fontanier : L'Inde, ii., 57.

and a third in the province of Meerpur. They invited more of their nation, aggrandized themselves by conquest, and speedily came in contact with the British frontier. Usurpers in every sense of the word, they became the worst tyrants over the people subdued by them. They held their dominions as a province of Kabul, securing their title by acknowledging their dependence. They robbed the population of all that was valuable to it, spoiled the best lands to form their hunting grounds, and in rapine and blood sealed their power upon them.¹

The English early commenced an intercourse with Sindh, but though well treated by the people, were early also insulted and injured by the Amirs, whose treachery was not resented.² Up to 1832, the relations between the two Governments were of the slightest kind, resulting in little advantage to either. In that year, however, a new treaty was framed, with a view of cementing friendship. It stipulated for a safe passage for travellers and merchants through Sindh, the free navigation of the Indus for

¹ Burnes : Travels, iii., 257.

² Pottinger : Beluchistan, 492.

purposes of trade only, for a fixed tariff, and no arbitrary tolls or duties; on the other hand, no merchants were to reside in the country, while travellers were bound to have passports. The Amirs, also, engaged to modify the tariff, if it was found too high, and to aid in suppressing the marauding tribes on the borders of Cutch. Two years after the convention was renewed, commercial agreements were settled, a British Resident appointed, an agent sent to the port of the Indus, and a compact formed to secure the free navigation of the river. It is objected, that the Amirs desired to have no relations with us, and that we forced them to sign conventions. If that were true, it would not prove any injustice in these transactions. The Company was supreme in India over millions of people. Every government is bound by duty to procure the widest scope for the fair commercial enterprise of its subjects. If a state have its territories situated on the banks of a great river near the sea, it has no right to shut the navigation against those above, and an attempt to do this is justification of war. It may, indeed, be allowed by the great political contract of nations,

to derive advantage from its position by reasonable tolls, but no further. In every treaty, the advantage must be mutual, or there is no equity in the transaction. It is, then, an association of two for the benefit of one. The Amirs held the country of the Lower Indus, but the Khan of Bhawalpur, the Monarch of the Punjab, and the English, had an equal right to the stream, as a general highway of trade ; so that when they invited the Governors of Sindh to fix proper duties upon the transit of merchandise, they treated them with sufficient liberality.¹ Both powers pledged themselves to perpetual amity, and in case of disagreement, each agreed only to invoke the faith of this friendly charter.

It was at this period, that statesmen in India became sensible of the dangers accumulating beyond the north-west frontier. Russia was rolling her arms upon Persia, Persia upon Afghanistan, Afghanistan upon the Punjab, and now the Punjab threatened Sindh ; so that the continuous tide of aggression reached from Lassa to southern India. Ranjit Singh made a

¹ Napier : Conquest of Sindh, i., 42.

descent on a district subject to the Amirs, and applied for British aid. This was, of course, refused; the Maharaja was deterred from his ambitious projects, and proposals were made to the Sindhian chiefs for securing the integrity of their dominions. In these lying documents, as they have been characterized, the English scarcely dissembled their design of employing force, should negotiations fail.¹ If this means that the British Government was resolved that the Amirs should act faithfully upon solid engagements, it is true; but if it implies that the treaties were dictated to them under threats, all who have perused the state papers on the subject, know such an assertion to be entirely erroneous.

Divided into numerous houses, the Amirs could never be brought to act upon the simple ground of faith. They evaded or violated every article of every treaty made with them. They forged letters, seals, and documents; they insulted the English Government; they systematically employed fraud, falsehood, and chicanery of every kind, to release themselves from the

¹ Fontanier : L'Inde, ii.. 62.

obligations, without knowing the advantages which attached to their alliance with the Company. Had it been otherwise, it would not, perhaps, have been so necessary, and possibly not so just, to push so closely our relations with Sindh. As it was, every suggestion of policy and justice urged the English to chain these crafty tyrants to good faith. In April, 1838, a new treaty was concluded. It engaged the British Government to interpose its good offices between the Amirs and Ranjit Singh; it stipulated for an accredited British resident at Hyderabad, who should be protected by a body guard, and allowed the Princes of Sindh, to depute an envoy to reside at the Court of the British Government.¹ It is untrue, that any force or menace was employed to obtain the ratification of the compact. The English, however, frankly told the Amirs, that as Ranjit Singh threatened them with immediate invasion and conquest, which, there is no doubt, it was within his ability to achieve, they could only undertake to protect them on these terms.

While the Amirs, by continuing to betray

¹ Thornton : North West Countries, ii., 227.

every pledge of their convention, lost all right to be on terms of friendship, or even forbearance, the politics of Afghanistan dangerously rising upon the north-west frontier of our empire, forced the English to seek every ground where they might favourably meet the difficulties which threatened them.¹

¹ Napier : Conquest of Sindh, 49.

CHAPTER XXVI.

OFFENCES OF THE AMIRS.

LORD AUCKLAND was resolved to create in Afghanistan a barrier against the aggressions which menaced India from the countries lying beyond. Before entering on this adventure it was necessary¹ to establish more satisfactory relations with Sindh. An envoy was deputed to them with instructions² to declare that the tripartite treaty had pledged the British Government to restore Shah Sujah, whom they now recognised as Sovereign of Afghanistan, and to require their assent to the measures essential for the prosecution of the great enterprise. In the

¹ Thornton : North West Countries, ii., 227.

² Correspondence, i., 40—42.

Simla proclamation the Governor-General announced that "a guaranteed independence will, upon favourable terms, be tendered to the Amirs of Sindh." What right had we to make this conditional? Such is the question commonly put by the partisans of these hunting lords,¹ whose fall has been bewailed in many an elegiac of graceful composition.

On the death of Nadir Shah, Sindh became subject to Kabul. One of its governors, when distressed by civil war, applied to the Afghan monarch to uphold him in his delegated authority; and when new governors rose to power, they professed allegiance and tendered tribute to Kabul.² In 1824, when Shah Sujah was contending for his throne, the Amirs rebelled; he subdued them, and they submitted, avowing his authority. It is quite clear, therefore, that Sindh was dependent on Afghanistan; and in recognising Shah Sujah's claim, we recognised the full extent of dominions belonging to his house. To have denied his claims on the country of the Lower Indus would have been to

¹ Dry Leaves on Young Egypt.

² Wilson: British India.

afford just opportunity to those who would infallibly have cried out, that having the unfortunate prince in our hands, we stripped him of a fine province, and gave it away to favourite allies.

The conduct of the Amirs was such as left no doubt of their unqualified hostility. They agreed, however, to allow the English to march a force through their territory, which it was absolutely necessary to do, in the service of the monarch, who had a right to enforce his claim.¹ The army passed through once without molestation; and the provisions of the treaty of 1839 were for a short time observed: but when their full settlement was required, the Amirs refused. It had already become evident that they were animated by an unconquerable spirit of hostility against our Government, and this induced them to pursue the policy which led to their destruction. The British Government behaved to them with severity. It was rigorous in its demands upon them; but it was not unjust. Friendship was indeed in the preamble of every treaty, but common sense could not imagine any sentiment of mutual amity to exist. Enemies

¹ Taylor and Mackenna: *Ancient and Modern India*, 416.

were manœuvring one against the other, and the strength of civilization prevailed. It is not desirable to prove that the English had no design upon Sindh. It is even proper to know, what does not appear to have been hitherto divulged, that in 1830 a plan for its subjugation was laid before a secret committee of the East India Company by Captain J. Bonamy; for Sir John Malcolm—not proposing the enterprise, but explaining how it ought to be conducted, should events ever render it necessary.¹ But willingly to embrace is not licentiously to create an occasion of war, and here the division lies between a righteous, beneficial conquest, and a profligate aggression.

They were required to assist in the restoration of Shah Sujah, to admit a subsidiary force, while the campaign continued, in order to guard the frontier, to lend the fortress of Sukkur, which commanded the navigation of the Indus; and these were in no way contrary to good policy or honour. For when states are disputing, one cannot appeal against the other to a compact every article of which he has systematically

¹ Bonamy : Unpublished Memoir.

violated. This was true of the Amirs. Their crimes against national faith may be briefly summed up.

They entered into treaties, which met with the impediments usual in Oriental diplomacy, but which they never protested against, and which cannot, therefore, be described as having been forced upon them—treaties which, faithfully observed would have made them more prosperous, and their people more happy.¹ The Khan of Khypur, nevertheless, addressed a treasonable letter to Shere Singh, against his declarations of friendship, and his absolute engagement to open no correspondence with any chief or state without British sanction.² His confidential minister compassed the escape of a political prisoner, and employed him to rebel against the English. His agent placed in the stocks and otherwise maltreated the servant of a British officer, suffering no punishment for the offence. He stopped boats on the Indus, and exacted illegal taxes; thus, violating not only the spirit but the exact letter of his compact. He

¹ Sir C. Napier : Memoir of Sindh, 1842.

² Treaty, 24th Feb., 1838.

seized and imprisoned British subjects, whom he released under threats, but made no reparation for the injury.¹ Besides this, he made several attempts to excite insurrection against his allies.² Some of the instances here noticed are merely to show the hostile animus of the Amirs in Upper Sindh, who are lamented as an example of honour and liberality unrewarded.

The chiefs of the lower country opened themselves to a heavier list of charges. Meer Nusseer Khan attempted by an artful device to embroil our political agent in a quarrel, contrary to the declaration of friendship which the treaty contained; but this friendship being itself a fiction, the complaint is worth no notice. He joined, however, in exacting illegal tolls, defending the act, and declaring his intention to repeat it. He closed the navigation of the Indus, notwithstanding our express stipulations for free transit. He delayed to fulfil his agreement to deliver over Shikarpur, when news of the disasters in Afghanistan induced him to hope he might successfully resist. He secretly coined base money to defraud

¹ Return of Complaints : Papers.

² Outram : Oct. 14, 1842.

the British Government. He neglected to fulfil the third article of the treaty. He broke the second by exacting illegal tolls, and obstructing the navigation of the Indus in various places, on various occasions, and by various means; in a word, he and his brother allies no less systematically than deliberately and flagrantly broke faith in every respect with the British Government, which was thus absolved from holding any terms with them.¹

Nevertheless, new efforts at a pacific settlement were made, an envoy was deputed to negotiate new treaties,² and whatever is laid to the charge of our Government before that period it is admitted by the ablest advocate of the Amirs, that events forced Sir Charles Napier into the vigorous policy he afterwards pursued.³

In considering these transactions, however, it is impossible justly to leave out of view the people of Sindh. They also have some claim to notice. Therefore, let us inquire whether the conquest did them any wrong, whatever it did to their other foreign rulers.

¹ Second Memoir of Complaints: Papers.

² Thornton: North West Countries, ii., 229.

³ Dry Leaves on Young Egypt, 62.

The Amirs of Sindh were among the lowest and the vilest tyrants whose rule has ever cursed humanity. They have, indeed, been otherwise represented. They have been eulogised as affectionate, kind, and gentle, almost to effeminacy, giving laws which suited the genius of the people.¹ But the genius of no people is suited by oppression. It is said also that nothing could be charged against them, more than could be charged against the great majority of English gentlemen.² English gentlemen will probably disclaim the compliment; for the Amirs were known from the earliest period to exercise the most debasing despotism.³ The welfare, with even the existence of their subjects was sacrificed to their barbarous pleasures.⁴ They persecuted the Hindus according to the most cruel maxims of an intolerant tyranny.⁵ They laid waste towns, villages, and hamlets, to form their hunting grounds, and every head of deer they killed cost

¹ Outram : Commentary, 474.

² Dry Leaves on Young Egypt, 65.

³ Sir John Malcolm : Unpublished Mem.

⁴ Thornton : North West Countries, ii., 212.

⁵ Masson, i., 379.

Sindh eight hundred rupees;¹ they sold the beautiful women of the country as slaves, and sent them confined in chests to Persia;² they depopulated thousands of hamlets, sending forth their miserable tenants to seek new homes if a spot could be found whither this persecution would not pursue them. They razed a village, and banished its people, because the crowing of the cocks disturbed their game.³

Barbarians, without any of the barbarous virtues, they wallowed in profusion, while their people groaned in misery—living entirely for themselves, while their country sank daily in poverty and degradation.⁴ Nor were the inhabitants insensible of their sufferings, or ignorant of the revolution which might spare them this oppression. Incapable of asserting their own rights with their own arms through the operation of that Asiatic policy, equally injurious to subject and ruler, which renders a people innocuous by depriving it of all the means of action,

¹ Postans : Personal Observations, 7, 8, 10, 27, 56, 57.

² Correspondence, 13.

³ Burnes : Visit to Sindh, 79.

⁴ Burnes : Travels, i., 70.

they earnestly desired to be British subjects. When we occupied Karrachi and Sukkur, they thronged to them in multitudes to escape their Indian rulers,² and since the conquest they have enjoyed peace, and repaid the blessing with their gratitude.

¹ Correspondence, 338—Tecker, 15.

² Postans, 32.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CONQUEST OF SINDH.

AGAINST the people of Sindh, therefore, we were obviously guilty of no injustice. They at least desired our rule, and favoured our enterprise; for none but the plundering hordes of soldiery resisted our invasion. Therefore the question is reduced to one between the Amirs and the British Government. The Amirs were tributaries of our ally. They and their forefathers had paid tribute to Shah Sujah himself.¹ He had indeed released them on certain conditions, but of these they had performed none.² Either, then, they were fraudulent and rebel-

¹ Burnes : Correspondence, 55—Pottinger, 88.

² Pottinger, 45.

lions subjects, or they were independent because their original master was engaged with enemies who prevented him enforcing his acknowledged rights—a doctrine which would loosen the political framework of the world. Where is no right, there can be no injury; but the Amirs supplied abundant reasons for their own overthrow, even had they been lawful sovereigns.

They had carried on treasonable correspondence with Persia.¹ They had invoked the aid of Mohammed Ali, which, if it showed their ignorance, proved no less their treachery;² and treachery is by no means innocent because its designs are absurd. They received and intrigued with Russian spies, disguised as Turks.³ They sought to induce Ranjit Singh to attack us.⁴ They insulted our flag, and fired at the representative of our power.⁵ They plundered the stores of our army.⁶ They agreed to supply us at Karrachi

¹ Pottinger, 12, 15, 45.

² Pottinger: Papers, 33.

³ Outram: Papers, 849.

⁴ Leekie to Pottinger: May, 1842.

⁵ Pottinger to Burns: October, 1842.

⁶ Clitborn: Papers, 384.

with provisions free of impost,¹ but secretly forbade the people to bring any food to our quarters.²

Had they been, then, we may repeat, the original lawful and independent rulers of the Valley of the Indus, their offences would have justified war against them; but where they had no right to govern, they could suffer no injury in being deposed. We had indeed by political mistakes treated with them as sovereign princes, but an error in our diplomacy did not constitute legality in their usurpation. In the tripartite treaty, and in all previous history, they are confessedly exhibited as tributary to Kabul; and though the King, whose cause we adopted, did not succeed, the Amirs by no means gained a right of independence in consequence of that. They never possessed indeed the only title which could have justified their power—the affection of their people. Every law, therefore, of wisdom and humanity, justified the British Government in doing what it has done. When the crisis

¹ Leckie : Correspondence, 313.

² Pottinger, 23—Eastwick, 130—Aitkin, 362.

arrived, war was declared by the Amirs, who attacked Major Outram in his residence, and drove him from it. It was then resolved to punish them. And the battle of Meannee—well led by Napier—well conducted by his officers—gloriously fought by his troops—gave us a valuable province, which is daily becoming more tranquil, prosperous, and happy under our dominion. Sir Charles Napier administered its affairs with admirable judgment; and the fertility of Egypt, justly ascribed to it by Lord Ellenborough, who took the most statesman-like view of the whole transaction, already yields abundant support to a peaceful and contented population.

One error, involving an act of partiality, and therefore of injustice, was committed. Ali Moorad, Amir of Khypur, being regarded as comparatively faithful to his engagements, was not only allowed to continue in power, but received an enlargement of territory; while the other chiefs were removed in captivity to the seat of Indian administration. Recently, however, his treachery and false dealing have been discovered, and he has been deposed; otherwise, the conquest of Sindh appears to have been of the most honourable and

politic of British achievements in the East. There have not, indeed, been wanting persons to declare our proceedings in the Valley of the Indus as more contrary to international law than the recent conduct of Russia in the north, or those movements of the Czar which united the French and English fleets in the Mediterranean, to assert the independence of the Sultan.¹ But this is simply a daring assertion, unproved, and obviously absurd. Other grounds must be chosen to show that the annexation of Sindh was an offence.

An offence it may have been against the principle of despotism, which acknowledges no universal law—against the false majesty of bloody and petty sceptres,—against the cruelty of corrupted power; but it redeemed millions of the human race from humiliation, misery, and servitude. Let the sacrifice of the Amirs be, if history will, remembered as what an orator termed the sacrilegious invasion of a palace;² let it have been an insult against the haughty licence of those Indian lords to spoil and trample under foot the peace and industry of a whole nation. It was at any rate a providential

¹ Fontanier : L'Inde, 267.

² Sheridan : Speech against Hastings.

infringement of their privilege, which the deep and, perhaps, unconscious joy of the people will vindicate for ever against the acerbity of cynical politicians.

In Gwalior, Lord Ellenborough, to resent numerous injuries which the British Government there received, crushed the last remnant of Mahratta power, and disbanded the Mahratta army, but left an open way to new complications by failing to annex the territory. The blame, however, lay not so much with him as with those who controlled his policy.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CONQUEST OF THE PUNJAB.

ONE more conquest remains to be justified, if that needs justification of which no one impugns the equity, or the wisdom.

The Punjab has, throughout Indian history, been the opening scene of conquest, except in the case of the British, for with them it was the last. It is an extensive territory, in the west of India, deriving its name from the Persian compound of "Five Waters."¹ There are, however, within its boundaries six rivers, the Indus, Jhylum, Chenab, Ravee, Beas, and Sutlej; but the political frontiers have so frequently changed, that they cannot with certainty be defined. Including the latest acquisitions of

the Sikhs, their dominions spread from the Karakorum Hills on the north, to the Indus on the north-east and west, and the Sutlej and the Ghara on the east and south-east, a superficial extent of about one hundred and twenty-five thousand square miles.¹ The northern division is lofty, with mountain peaks aspiring above the level of perpetual snow, from twenty-seven to thirty thousand feet.² Their scenery has all the characteristics of the sublime—vastness, obscurity, and grandeur,—the summits piled with the accumulated winters of the Himalaya, their lower slopes hung with woods, and among these valleys of exuberant fertility. The plain of the Punjab is a fruitful country, divided into natural sections. Near rivers, the soil is very rich, while in other parts it is poor and sandy; however, the whole of it might become very productive, but under the Sikhs, misgovernment produced its invariable results. The influences of nature, unaided by art, wasted themselves in feeding the desert. The Mogul canals were destroyed, the earth became hard,³ the plains

¹ Thornton: North West Countries, ii., 116.

² Vigne: Travels in Kashmere, ii., 40.

³ Burnes: Travels, i., 10.

were overrun with jungle and woods. Even the capital was situated in a wilderness, and the sites of deserted and ruined villages and towns indicated that the curse of misrule was on the land.¹

It was in the country of the Five Rivers that the arms of Alexander acquired much of their Indian lustre. In the tenth century, Mahmoud, of Ghuznee, made it the scene of similar exploits, and it passed under successive masters, until in 1809, Ranjit Singh, a Sikh of the tribe of Jats, one of the lowest but most numerous races of India, commenced his career of conquest. In the middle of the fifteenth century, there had been born among the idolaters of the East a preacher called Nanak, who introduced a new creed—a creed which it is not proper here to explain, but one highly superior to the old religion in its philosophy and its ethics. Thus the Sikhs arose. From a sect, they became a nation, and in 1808, were among the most formidable native powers in Asia. They had gone on conquering until they came in contact with the English; but here their advance was checked, for they met an authority far superior to their own.

¹ Jameson : Report Journal Asiatic Society, 1849, 194.

In 1809, a treaty of peace was concluded between the English and Ranjit Singh. Mutual hatred had long existed, but was gradually removed. The Sikh monarch was allowed to pursue his projects of ambition, while he avoided trenching on the rights of the British Government or its allies; but his military and their commercial enterprises at length came into collision.¹ Ranjit Singh probably never abandoned the hope of achieving the Company's overthrow, which appears to have been his daily dream; but he died in 1839 without making the attempt. He had, however, accomplished enough to prove his genius one of no ordinary character. He had found a set of petty states, which he consolidated into one; he had disciplined wild and irregular bands of horsemen into a splendid army; he had formed a magnificent park of artillery, and raised no inconsiderable revenue.²

The further annals of the Punjab need not be traced. The commanding genius of Ranjit Singh was extinct, and the kingdom which that genius alone held together, was immediately rent

¹ Cunningham : Sikhs, 218.

² Prinsep, 186—Burnes, i., 291—Masson, i., 430—Steinbach, 58.

by intestine strife. In 1844, it was governed by unprincipled chieftains, coercing or conciliating a rapacious soldiery, which plundered and oppressed a weak and impoverished people. The disorganization thus produced caused deep alarm within our boundaries, but every possible effort was made to continue the relations of peace. The defence of the frontier was strengthened, and this the unprincipled Sikh leaders took care to represent as a project of ours for invading their country. They who had been educated by Ranjit Singh in a design of overthrowing the British power,¹ were not now content to relinquish their projects. They marched an army to the borders, refused all explanation, and invaded the British territory.

War was deliberately opened by them. It was accepted with vigour by the English. The conflict of Moodkee, the two days' fight at Ferozeshah, and the brilliant engagement of Aliwal, were succeeded by the "bloody and desperate battle of Sobraon, when a hundred and twenty great guns were roaring all day in the valley of the Sutlej. Political writers in Eng-

¹ Macgregor : History of the Sikhs.

land declared at once that the Punjab should be annexed. They prophesied that a new invasion would take place, and that conquest was inevitable.¹ But the Governor-General, infected with a desire to win the fashionable praise of moderation, contented himself with appropriating the country between the Sutlej and the Beas, and enforcing the payment of indemnity. He took other pledges for the continuance of peace, but no experienced statesman trusted to these arrangements. It was clear to all accustomed to the course of Indian politics, that the Punjab was destined soon to become a British province.

The proof of these views was established, sooner perhaps than many politicians expected. The war was not ended, but prorogued. The murder of Vans Agnew and Anderson, the faithless conduct of Shere Singh, the Lahore conspiracy, the great rebellion of the Sikh army and Sikh population, led to a new war, which resulted in the final conquest of the Punjab, though Kashmere still remained under the administration of a native prince. This was an unfortunate choice of policy, but it may prove

¹ Foreign Quarterly—Morning Chronicle.

instructive; for in the miserable and wasting administration of that famous valley, with all its poetical beauties, its floating isles, its lakes, its legends, its gardens, and its celebrated people, now doomed to a demoralizing servitude, we find a proper contrast to the just and peaceful administration of the Punjab. In the conquest of the one, however, is a prophecy for the annexation of the other.

CHAPTER XXIX.

CHARACTER OF OUR INDIAN POLICY.

WE have thus followed the course of British conquest in India from the first arrival of an English trader at one of its wealthy ports, to the annexation of the Punjab, which almost completed the symmetry of that enormous structure. I believe that our position has been vindicated. Our conquests appear to me to have resulted from no flagrant spirit of injustice ; from no wicked conspiracy against the rights and liberties of India. We found a region where, from the Indus to the Ganges, every state was ruled by powers which had made themselves empires or kingdoms by the sword, and which, if all conquest be usurpation, were equally usurpers with

ourselves, being equally strangers to the soil and to the people they subdued. We formed commercial engagements with them; we agreed to return service to the Great Mogul in consideration of the trading privileges he granted to us; we were attacked by the French, and only commenced war, at the solicitation of the lawful Mohammedan princes, against rebels, when our very existence on that coast could be preserved by no other means. Thus our political influence was early founded. We established a state in India, and with the exception of some instances which I have not failed to point out, or feared to condemn, I believe that we have not, except when forced to war, when our absolute rights were repeatedly assailed, our territories attacked, our protected allies injured, or our political system threatened with destruction, drawn the sword to extend our empire. Thus it appears that the conquests were justifiable.

If the conquests were justifiable, our position in India is doubly vindicated. We govern by right of lawful acquisition, and we govern by right of wise and virtuous administration. Reforms are required, and they will take place when public opinion insists upon them; but on the whole,

India is, perhaps, considering the circumstances of its political and social history, one of the best-governed countries in the world.

It is most honourable to the people of this country that they should desire to see established in British India a system of government identical in principle, or at least similar in effect, to their own. But we cannot justly forget the portentous difficulties of the task. The masters of those countries differ in their origin, language, civilization, and religion from the people; they have no reciprocity of sentiment with them; they are still imperfectly acquainted with their ideas; they have to combat a thousand ancient and inveterate prejudices, the force of which few Europeans can understand, and all these considerations are to be held in view when we reflect on the duties of an Asiatic Government.

It is not long since I saw repeated the assertion of Burke, that if a sudden disaster were at one stroke to sweep the English from India, they would leave no monument of their beneficence, of their power, of their civilization, no relic to show that the country had ever been ruled by any spirit more humane or liberal than that of the vulture and the savage. Burke, however,

was the slave of his own imaginative genius. He earnestly searched for truth, collected his materials, arranged his plan, and proceeded to develope his description, but then immediately passed his object, drowned himself amid exaggerated figures, and overflowed the whole topic with such exuberant fancy, that little of the original solidity of his information or his arguments could be discerned. Bewildered in the illusion his own feelings had created, he bewilders still the minds of those who read him; they are overpowered and carried away; and while they laugh at the oracle of Delphi, and despise the Sybil leaves, they still hear an oracle in the trumpet of the British orator.¹ Therefore, the old accusations against the English in India are perpetually renewed—on the old ground. They have built no mighty edifices, they have not imitated those splendid structures, those Sypselidean tombs and Olympian temples, which the grand and free genius of the ancients delighted to raise. Literally as well as morally untrue, are all these reflections upon the administration of India. The English, were they to-morrow annihilated

¹ A remark of Lord John Russell: *Memoirs of the Affairs of Europe*, i., 54.

throughout Asia, would leave behind monuments enough to preserve for them to the latest time the gratitude and veneration of the world.

In judging them by their works, we are not to think of Hindustan falling under their sway in the flourishing condition revealed to us by history in the remoter ages of its existence. We are not to imagine the period when the marble-built cities of the Ganges were in the freshness of their wealth and splendour; when Agra, Delhi, and Benares, were glowing with all the luxury which the pride and lust of monarchs can devise, or the servile industry of a people can supply. Even those ages of barbarous prosperity, when the plunder of a hundred villages constituted the revenue of one Indian lord, when superfluities abounded to a few, and necessities were stinted to the many—had passed away when the English arrived, and a long decline and demoralization had produced results which centuries of good government will scarcely cure. It was not long before the whole system was utterly disorganized; and it is a proverbial truth that there never was anarchy where there had not been despotism.

Under the ancient Hindu dynasty, the more politic rule of priests, while it enslaved the popu-

lation in the fetters of a sensual faith, tempered its tyranny with moderation. Their power was single, pervading, and irresistible; but it was not the less secure because it was less felt, and the Indian races, under a tranquil sway, became polished, comparatively happy, and accustomed to the productive arts of peace. This, indeed, was only true while they submitted in uncomplaining acquiescence to the sacerdotal supremacy; for an insult or offence against the Brahmins was visited with punishment too fearful to describe,¹ yet the general course of administration was less severe. When, however, the Mohammedan invaders arrived, though they adorned the region with many fine edifices, they crushed the natives under a rude and improvident despotism. They added to the atrocious cruelty of the criminal law; they multiplied the causes of slavery; they allowed the murderous fires of suttee to blaze, the blood of young children to flow, and women to be made the victims of a vile and degrading idolatry. Corruption was the presiding influence in their courts of justice, as, indeed, it was under nearly all the native powers in India.² They

¹ Institutes of Menu, viii., 271, 272.

² Orme: Government of Hindustan, 444—Mill, i., 187.

exacted from the cultivator the chief part of his produce, and left him no peace in the enjoyment of the rest.¹ This, which in our own day was true of the Austrian rulers in Carynthia and Carniola, instead of exasperating the people into enemies, degraded them into slaves. Nor were other essential characteristics of barbarism wanting, to render the Muslim policy, in contrast with that of the Christian government, as Gothic with Grecian art. Humanity at least cannot look back with repining to the days when independent princes reigned in India;² when all prisoners of war were murdered; when all suspected persons were put to the torture, when impaling, scourging, flaying, were the penalties of secondary crimes, when the poor were hunted for sport, like wild beasts, with dogs and cheetahs.³ Nor can we refer, as to a golden age, to the time when

¹ See Leitch Ritchie: *British World in the East*, i., 487, for an admirable notice of these systems.

² For illustrations of native rule, see Heber, ii., 420: Hodgson's *Nepaul*, *Journal of Asiatic Society*, i., 258, and Giuseppe's *Account, Asiatic Researches*, ii., 319. When a city was betrayed into his hands, the King of Nepaul cut off the lips and noses of all the principal inhabitants, infants at the breast among others.

³ Golam Hussein Khan: *History of Hindustan*. This writer, himself a Muslim, acknowledges the truth of these pictures.

Nadir Shah, in a massacre of seven days' duration, made a wilderness in the city of Delhi; while in the provinces subject to us, travellers break out in strains, perhaps, of exaggerated rapture, on the matchless cultivation of the plains.¹

The monuments of a genuine and pious civilization are not pyramids, or pagodas, or towers, or columns, or any of those huge trophies by which the daring but barbarian genius of a Pharaoh or a Mogul, endeavoured to perpetuate its fame. The achievements of the English in their Indian possessions belong to another order.

They did not appear to the natives like the Spaniards, as centaurs, wielding the lightnings of heaven, or like the Arabs, irresistible in their religious zeal, or like the Tartars in China, or the Gothic invaders of Southern Europe. They came without a plan; they followed those who had dedicated the old Nestorian Churches on the coast of Malabar, and in less than one hundred years accomplished the erection of an empire, spacious as that which nine centuries of Roman conquest, from Romulus to Trajan, were required

¹ Heber : Letter, 27th Jan., 1824.

to complete. Every ancient power has disappeared before them. The only independent princes remaining, are recent usurpations, and the governors whom their toleration allows to rule, are standing accusations against their justice, and the sincerity of their desire to promote the civilization of Asia.

CHAPTER XXX.

MONUMENTS OF ENGLISH RULE.

IF, however, in the protected states there is still a work of conquest to complete, in the acquired provinces great and signal reformatations have been achieved by the English. They have abolished the hideous crime of burning the wife with the remains of her husband, which sprang from the bloody idolatry of the Brahmins;¹ they have extirpated infanticide from populations amid which the virtues of human nature appear to have been renewed; they have redeemed thousands from that superstitious horror of the

¹ See Dubois: *Description*, 240—Abul Faz l' Ayeen Acberry 522—Tod: *Rajast'han*, i., 634—Ward, iii., 308—Heber, i., 70—Report, 1830, 72, 232.

widow's second marriage, which drove innumerable women to suicide, or the last resort of moral degradation; they have encouraged industry by protecting the people, first in the prosecution of their labours, and then in the enjoyment of their gains; they have extinguished the Thracian orgies of Juggernaut; they have prevented those chronic wars which formerly allowed vast military hordes to riot on a superfluity of plunder;¹ they have made great highways; they are educating the people; they are spreading the knowledge of Christianity, and they are communicating the humanity of Europe to the swarthy idolaters of Asia. These are their monuments. Brass and marble never formed any so durable, for these are the victories of civilization, which ratify the triumphs of the sword.

If other monuments are required, India exhibits them—the noblest which can be imagined. The interest of money reduced from thirty-six or twelve, to five per cent., is the sign of a credit more valuable than all the gilded tombs of all the kings; the rapid influx of population to

¹ See, for a picture of a battle-field after one of the native wars, *Oriental Memoirs*, ii., 73, 74.

every conquered province, is evidence of beneficent rule, better than flaunting records can afford; the steady decrease of crime during thirty years, proves the establishment of a justice whose administration is acknowledged to be good, mild, and speedy;¹ the extirpation of gang-robbers has given safety to the highway; the decrease of fortifications round the villages, and the voluntary disarmament of the peasantry, show that security exists, and sixteen thousand beautiful gardens, extensive as parks—laid out within a few years in Bengal alone—exhibit a tranquillity and content of which there is no trace in any former period of Indian history. Along the coasts, the security of trade is complete, while formerly the maritime population was characteristically piratical—the Sudra tribe of Kaloris especially, on the western shores, avowing the profession of robbers, not only without disguise, but with pride.²

As for substantial monuments, do they not abound?³ The banks repaired, the roads, the

¹ Björnsternja : British Empire in India, 139.

² Dubois : Description, 3.

³ See Alison : History of Europe, where, in vol. vii. and viii. are some remarkable passages on British India.

harbours, the aqueducts, constructed ; the extended irrigation ; the jungle changed into rice-fields ;¹ the rise of a middle class ; the creation of a great market ; the organized police ; the clothing of naked millions—even the extraordinary improvement in the breed of horses—these are monuments more splendid than the trophies of Nadir or Akbar.² And the institutions erected in the East by the superior and diffusive genius of English charity, are better testimonies of our rule than all the palaces, pagodas, and tombs from Malabar to the Himalaya. When also, I hear that we have left India more desolate than the realm of the savage and the haunt of the obscene vulture, I ask what government ever bequeathed more honourable memorials than the villages—more than two thousand in number—which were in Holkar's country alone rebuilt and re-peopled in the course of three years?³ And how much has India not gained by her people being delivered from that bloody proscription of whole families and tribes, to which they were

¹ See M. Martin's *British India* for an interesting notice of these works.

² For a catalogue of them, see Stocqueler's *Hand Book of India*.

³ Malcolm : *Memoir on Central India*.

formerly liable, from the capricious ferocity of their princes?

Moreover, we have to recollect that civilization is an influence not of sudden growth. Less than half a century has passed since India was overrun by Mahratta and Pindarrie hordes, with others less famous but equally destructive. To illustrate the progress of the country subject to such visitations at so recent a period, we may point to Mairwara, a highland district among the Araballa Hills, between Marwar and Ajmeer.¹ A population of robbers converted into an industrious peasantry, a police organized among them, female infanticide—once the habitual custom—abolished, the sale of women prohibited, the land-tax reduced, gifts of tools and advances of money made to the cultivators, employment general among the people, a new capital sprung up, numerous hamlets increased to towns, a hundred and six new villages built within twelve years; nearly six thousand tanks and wells, with two hundred and ninety embankments constructed—such are the works of peace in that little district

¹ Lieut.-Col. Dixon: Sketch of Mairwara. A volume of striking interest.

alone.¹ Therefore, in all confidence, might a learned writer of another nation say, that India was never, at any former period of its history, blessed with felicity so true, or with such auspicious hope, as since subjected to the sway of Great Britain.²

¹ The new villages are unwall'd. A country is never so weak as when every village is fortified—as formerly in India.—Montesquieu, *Esprit des Lois*, iii., 503.

² Garcin de Tassy: *Literature Hindoui*. Dedication, i.

CHAPTER XXXI.

PROSPECTS OF BRITISH INDIA.

It has been prophesied that when the Russians invade British India, the false basis of our empire will dissolve, the secret hatred of the native races will discover itself in fanatic ebullition, and the rabble of Sipahis flying will leave their white officers alone to die in the Muscovite ranks,¹ when a new Alaric and a new Atilla may rise among the northern hills to repeat the havoc made by Hyder and the Mahratta hordes. It is well for an oracle to appoint a remote period for the accomplishment of its prediction, but the precursors of this catastrophe have certainly not yet appeared; and though reflection is indeed too

¹ De Warren : *L'Inde Anglaise*, ii., 365.

late when the danger is blackening round our heads, it will be early enough to suspect the fidelity of our coloured ranks when they have evinced signs of failing faith or courage. Chivalrous allegiance, it is indeed suggested, is, in the Sipahis, no virtue; for nothing to them is more impossible than treason. What is the value of that honour which no power would offer to seduce?¹ It is true there may be no Indian prince capable of supporting a division of the British army, or of bearing the Company's resentment if he did; but that many have been infatuated enough to make the attempt is equally certain, and our reliance is more perfect than that would be which rested alone on this negative loyalty. There are in the world no troops more faithful, more zealous, more conscious of their honour than the native regiments in the service of the East India Company, and the temper of the population is as remote from discontent as any government could desire. Meanwhile, however, the consolidation of our Asiatic Empire is a task still to be completed, and it remains for the wisdom of future statesmen to perfect the achieve-

¹ Fontanier, ii., 296.

ments of soldiers and politicians in a former day.

It was said by a statesman of commanding genius,¹ that the English constitution, more than the English arms conquered Ireland; so the English language and English laws must complete the subjugation of India. The Hindus made theirs a universal power, and gave their speech almost to every race from the Karakorum range to the fabled bridge of Rama, from the stream of Arachosia to the Golden Chersonese. The Mohammedans ravaged the country, but remained to repair in some degree their havoc, and colonized the rich plains they had devastated with fire and sword. They introduced new arts, and improved what existed before their arrival.

The Hindus previously could not turn an arch, raising their bridges on pillars,² but in their domes, though this principle was not exhibited, an equally graceful effect was produced.³

The English are now supreme, and when Afghanistan is acquired will be secure. They have

¹ Burke : Conciliation with America, iii., 83.

² Buchanan : Journey, i., 61.

³ Chambers : Asiatic Researches, i., 151.

then much to perform. They have to carry on the labour of enlightening an immense and various population. This is already far advanced; for while in England the numbers of those who could read and write was a few years since one in eleven, and in Prussia, one in seven, in India the proportion was one in five.¹ Recently the progress made, as I learn from a well-informed and observant traveller,² is astonishing, and Professor Wilson's remarkable success in the translation of the Rigveda is clearing the way for the march of those intellectual forces which are to shake, shatter, and level the gloomy but stupendous fabric of Brahminical superstition. Thousands of intelligent Hindus are perceiving, from the witness of their own religious books—the scriptures and canons of their ancient faith—that the priesthood has deluded them with monstrous traditionary legends and false interpolations, invented to furnish resources for the fund of sacerdotal craft, in the credulity of an ignorant multitude.

Even the Mohammedan population, influenced

¹ Montgomery Martin, 412.

² Forbes : Unpublished Notes.

unconsciously by the discovery of truths introduced among them by sectarian controversy, are retreating from their narrow strongholds of fanaticism to the broader ground of a more liberal religious law. Though they hold in aversion the tenets of Christianity, and class their professors in the same catalogue with the black-clad Kaffirs, secluded among the remoter valleys of Afghanistan; yet in the same spirit of respect which induces them in Egypt to prefer a Christian before a Jew, they cannot refuse to acknowledge a superior genius in the colonists, continually recruited from beyond the sea, who have swallowed up a hundred kingdoms in their own. Two races have, since antiquity, changed the aspect of the world and propagated their religion, name, and language under every climate and on every soil—the Arabs, from their peninsula of alternate paradise and waste; and that mingled nation, with its nobility of Norman blood engrafted on the hardy stock of adventurers from the Cimbric Chersonese. These in India have struggled fairly to the issue, and a Muslim population of eighteen millions has been subdued by the fraction of a people; for the whole number of British-born

subjects in India does not exceed forty thousand.¹ Confessing this result, the Mohammedans of our Asiatic Empire submit in tranquil acquiescence to our rule, and gradually there is a visible amelioration in their intellectual character, in their ideas, in the objects to which they aspire, and in the means by which they attempt to promote their own social welfare. They are not retarded by that Chinese bigotry, that mechanical adherence to ancient doctrine which rejects all improvement because it is innovation; and by this liberal conduct they find their affluence to fructify, and the mercantile adventures they confide to wind and sea to come back to them with a grateful reflux of increase.

Still a deficiency of education leaves a great work for the future administration of India.² The means of accomplishing this are many, but few of them easy to develope. Caste prejudices oppose a formidable barrier to all reformation of the kind, and especially in diffusing the doctrines of a new creed too much circumspection is impossible; for one rude attack upon the religion or

¹ M'Culloch: *British Empire*, ii., 519.

² Leitch Ritchie: *British World in the East*, i., 431.

the manners of the Hindus might create in their hearts an irreconcilable hatred towards us and our institutions. At the same time, where an abuse is discovered, it may always, when a judicious process of reformation is to be pursued, be eradicated. This indeed is the usual course in India. There, says a French writer, known for the remarkable asperity of his remarks on our policy, it is exceedingly difficult to maintain a vicious institution long; for every official is eager to signalise himself as a reformer, and the Government perpetually occupies itself with projects and experiments of amelioration.¹

An amelioration in the system of police is desirable. Especial reforms are required in the distribution of fiscal burdens. In this the Company will find it the wisest policy to make a liberal and provident economy its rule. None acquainted with the social institutions of India, which are so interwoven with the habits and feelings of the people as to be all but ineradicable, could deny the difficulty—even the danger—of changing the forms of imposts, or when one has been reconciled by habit to the natives, of replacing it

¹ Fontanier : *L'Inde*, ii., 190.

by another. The Company's liabilities also are heavy, and a large revenue must be raised. Its debt is fifty-five millions sterling; its annual charges are twenty millions, while its revenues, which usually leave a small surplus, are chiefly raised upon the land tribute, the salt monopoly, the opium duties, the customs, the sayer and akbaree duties, and the stamps, producing in 1850, £20,221,952—besides the expense of collection.

The land tribute is on a feudal principle, exacting a proportion—varying in different provinces—of the annual produce. The vicious point of it is, that the ryot is not fully protected against the zemindar or renter, who is a sort of middleman. In the north-western provinces a better plan has been adopted, as well as in Madras; but in Bengal, Bahar, Orissa, and Benares the perpetual settlement of Lord Cornwallis, like all other perpetual settlements, has been found to require considerable modification. Reforms such as these may be delayed too long, and yielded too late; for the greatest convulsions narrated in history have sprung from questions of fiscal economy. The canal of the Ganges, however, and numerous other vast works now in progress, will improve for the use of the nation the gifts of God and the influences of nature, and gradually render the support

of imposts more easy to the population. It is always to be remembered also that the soil is less burdened, and more fairly, now than at any former time,¹ and that from the peculiar institution of the Hindus relating to the appropriation and taxing of land, great modifications are exceedingly difficult to introduce.²

The salt monopoly is an inheritance bequeathed to the Company from the Moguls. It raises that commodity, so essential to the comfort, and even existence, of the people, to three times its natural price; it opens avenues to smuggling and speculation, and it ought certainly to be reformed.³ To encourage the cultivation of grain, pulse, cotton, opium, sugar, coffee, indigo, tea, tobacco, and silk, with innumerable other products scarcely known, and certainly not appreciated in England—these are other means by which the energies of a hundred millions of subjects in Asia may be made profitable to themselves, and advantageous to Great Britain.

To infuse, therefore, the principles of truth

¹ Björnsterneja: *British Empire in India*, 147.

Forbes: *Oriental Memoirs*, ii., 48.

³ Yet the average payment of the people on this account is only three farthings per head per month.

into the great masses of a population divided between the ancient and mystical idolatry of Brahma, the immense and gloomy system of the Buddhists, the later creed of the Prophet, and a hundred other sects; to teach India the language of England, to throw open to the natives more widely all the avenues to office, but invariably to require in the aspirant a knowledge of the imperial tongue; to encourage cultivation by lightening the ryots' burdens; to foster the relations between class and class, and population with population, so that a harmony of feeling may pervade the great society submitted to their power, is the work for the governors of India. In this lies the strength of British dominion in the East, and the Company will be tried by its achievements. History in the end is impartial. If the English have acted unrighteously in Asia, the smoothness of flattery will not save them from the judgments of a future age; but if they do well, no untempered asperity can obliterate the record of their acts or the splendour of their fame.

CHAPTER XXXII.

VALUE OF BRITISH INDIA.

THE advantages derived by Great Britain from her Indian possessions are extremely important. Not to speak of the surplus revenue it from time to time transmits to the imperial treasury, it affords a splendid school of statesmanship and administration, where a great number of men are employed, with liberal salaries, in the conduct of political affairs.¹ Commercially, its value is scarcely to be exaggerated. It has created an immense trade. In 1789 two million pounds of wool were exported from its shores, through Flanders and Holland, to our markets; in 1847 a hundred millions were exported, besides forty millions to China, and wool in a proportion

¹ McCulloch: British Empire, ii., 510.

somewhat similar has been added to the consumption of the world.¹ The whole value of our trade with India is between twelve and thirteen millions sterling—superior to that with the United States. As an illustration of the rate at which this trade increases, the number of vessels entering Bombay harbour is a legitimate example. In 1835 two hundred and four ships were entered, with a burden of seventy-five thousand tons. In 1842 three hundred and fifty-two arrived, with a burden of a hundred and eighty thousand tons. In the former year, a hundred and eighty-one, and in the latter three hundred and twenty-eight were British vessels; the rest being French, Portuguese, American, Swedish, Dutch, Arab, and Siamese.

Nevertheless, the resources of the great Indian Peninsula are in a state of very imperfect development. The products of the territories actually under our sway are incompletely known, and very little appreciated in England. The energies of the cultivator also are not entirely free; though this may be said not only of the Indian ryot, but of the Dorsetshire labourer; for

¹ Leitch Ritchie : *British World in the East*, 457—66.

who pretends to discover a country where industry has to contend against no burdens? All estimates of governments must be comparative, until political science has advanced far beyond its present state, since no undisputed standard is known. Still less justice is done to commerce in the regions contiguous to our own possessions in the northern hill states, in Kashmere, in the countries west of the Indus, or in the more extended and more populous tracts of central Asia. There, though it may be found easy to deride the idea, immense markets remain to be opened up; for the populations display an unqualified preference for goods of British manufacture,¹ and the route to all these lies through British India. Consequently a vast field still lies fallow for the enterprise of this nation; but, much as there remains uncompleted, it is certain that Great Britain has for a hundred years been enriched to a very great extent by the commercial transactions of the East India Company.

It has been a question with the French whether their own acquisitions in Algeria, the

¹ See Levchine on the Kirghiz Kazaks, where many illustrations of this occur.

Russian seizures in the Caucasus, or the British conquests in India, are of the most advantage to the parent country. Algeria is prized as giving a great development to the French mercantile marine in the Mediterranean, and assures her, as she boasts, a naval preponderance on that sea. The Caucasus is to Russia very valuable to command the navigation of the Black Sea, and for the monopoly of trade in the Caspian. Its products also differ from those of the northern empire, silk and cotton being among them, which allows Muscovite industry a field for action. The commerce of England with India, however, amounts to so many millions more than that of Algiers or the "frozen Caucasus," and the navigation it encourages disciplines such a body of mariners, that India is undoubtedly a more advantageous possession to England than Algeria is to France or the Caucasus to Russia.

As for the cost—France expends thirty millions of francs annually on her African possessions; Russia expends eight millions on the Caucasus, with its four millions of inhabitants, and England administers to a population of a hundred millions of souls with an expense of about twenty millions sterling. The cost

of the French and Russian possessions comes out of the coffers of the state, that of British India is, with a surplus, defrayed from the territories themselves.¹ Fortune cannot honourably be acquired in the service of France and Russia ; but the Indian official, living in integrity amid luxury and ease, may accumulate affluence, and return with treasure to his native place. Thus the Caucasus is a burden to Russia, and Algeria to France, while India is a benefit to England. Such are the reasonings and conclusions of a French writer, who is not, however, a eulogist of the Company or of Great Britain; for he denies that Cossack or Zouave ever committed an action "so brutal" as the attack on Canton by our troops!²

¹ Algeria, in fifteen years, is said to have cost France the lives of 547,000 men, and 600,000,000 of francs.—St. Marie : 258-9.

² Fontanier : *L'Inde*, ii., 70, 71.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE PROTECTED STATES.

IN reviewing the actual political system of India, several states present themselves to our notice in unfortunate contrast with those which lie directly under our rule. The Government of Bengal allows a native prince still to exercise the domestic administration of the great Subah of the Deccan—the territories of Hyderabad under the authority of the Nizam. There, a native prince, cut off from all independent political relations external to his own dominions, exists by the sufferance and support of the British Government. To that Government he is indebted for immense sums of money, and for the maintenance of a power under the terms of a treaty

which he has continually and systematically broken. A population of nearly eleven millions is ground under his sway; his finances are in irretrievable confusion; his ministers prey on him, he preys on the people, and daily the process of disorganization and decay is going on, while the prince sits on a throne which would not last one year without the assistance of the East India Company. Anarchy and oppression consume the resources and desolate the face of a beautiful province, with an area of nearly a hundred thousand square miles.

This is an organized crime against humanity. It is for the British Government to redeem the state of Hydrabad from the demoralization and poverty with which it is afflicted, and to spare its reputation the reproach of conserving an authority exercised only for the vilest of purposes. Corruption, profligacy, oppression, practised in all the departments of the Nizam's administration, enfeeble and impoverish the country, and it is a shame that the English nation should lend itself to the support of a government so irretrievably weak and immoral, or to the further injury of a people already debased, degraded, and undone. Charity may ascribe to the Nizam the

virtue of good intentions, but it is scarcely wise to adopt the Jesuit principle of dividing his motives from his acts, and judging him by the philosophy of Escobar. When a sovereign is set up by British authority, one question alone is to be answered—Is he fit or able to reign? If he is, then there is no need of a contingent force to uphold him on his throne. If he is not, every aid extended to him is an offence against the people he oppresses. The Nizam's dominions, however, will inevitably, sooner or later, be absorbed in our own, and humanity will bless the occasion which rescues a fine country and a large population from the double curse of a tyranny at once feeble and destructive.

With still more justice may these criticisms be applied to the principle of upholding the King of Oude. He is, as his predecessors have ever been, a feeble, cruel, faithless despot, and we are the janissaries of his sanguinary power. We have lately been assured by an Indian official, high in the estimation of the Company, that he has seen the tax-gatherers in the territories of Lucknow, lighting their way through the country with the flames of forty villages at one time, set on fire because their wretched inhabitants

were unable to satisfy those vampires—the agents of an Oriental exchequer. It would be difficult, with the utmost license of style, to draw an exaggerated picture of the anarchy and impoverishment which prevail in Oude, under a prince whose imbecility renders his subjects equally contemptible with himself—*fraco Re fa forte gente fraca*. Whenever the British Government determines, therefore, to be consistent in its justice, it will do, what the King's want of faith gives it authority at any moment to resolve. It will withdraw its support from him; he will assuredly fall; and it will remain for the Company, instead of keeping up a standing army to defend a people which has been robbed of all that was worth protecting, to undertake the duty which attaches to an imperial power, and make late atonement to Oude for all the misery with which it has been afflicted under its native governors.

In Nepaul, there does not appear any present necessity for interference, or in Nagpore. But in the Gwalior state, the politics of Hydrabad seem to be continually repeated. A score of small states are dependent on this—the hereditary domain of Sindiah's family. The Guicowar's dominions, under the Baroda Residency, pre-

sent a picture of similar demoralization, which it is vain to cry out against, unless the whole territory is to be immediately annexed; for the subsidiary and the protective system is inseparably bound up with those evils. While the British states occupy an area of six hundred and seventy-seven thousand square miles, with a population of ninety-nine millions, the subordinate native states occupy an area of six hundred and ninety thousand square miles, with a population of only fifty-three millions; and thus one-half of India, with a third of its inhabitants, is under an inefficient, if not a destructive, government, upheld and protected by the British arms.

The whole of these ought gradually to be annexed, and the fiction of native sovereignty abolished. Were it a harmless fiction, it might be allowed to continue; but it is essentially injurious to India; and if in characterising the Company's administration of its own provinces, I employ terms of elevated panegyric, in dwelling on the system which upholds the coarse and savage tyranny of Oude, and the feeble and pernicious government of Hyderabad, I have no language to express conscientiously my views

except that of unqualified reprobation. The English people have to be instructed that their representatives in India support, at Lucknow, a King whose Neapolitan atrocities are ferocious, even in comparison with the usual acts of Oriental tyrants; that it protects in Kashmere a ruler who flays a man alive because he fails to pay his tax; and that in Hydrabad, a miserable creature, the victim of his ministers, as well as of his own imbecility and vice, is maintained in power, because the British Government, averse from conquest, desires to preserve its character for moderation.

Every year, however, that these evils are permitted to exist, will increase the difficulty of removing them, as well as the necessity we shun. Infallibly the rotten state of Hydrabad will, sooner or later, be incorporated as an integral province of our empire, and the longer this annexation is delayed, the more heavy and slow must be the labour of reclaiming it from barbarism to civilization. The ordinary question of history is thus reversed. It is not whether we have a right to conquer (for the conquest is already made), but whether, having conquered, we have a right to impose on the

provinces we have subdued cruel and feeble princes, whose only ambition is to gratify their degrading lusts, and whose sole power is one of destruction. Guilt, under these despots, is insolent, and innocence only is not secure. There is no law imposed to curb their licentious will, which is enforced under a prerogative derived from us. Every principle of morals, and every political maxim, is thus violated and defied. When an imperial government assumes the privilege to appoint viceroys, they should be charged to distribute justice and preserve peace; not to riot in the excesses of despotism, or give authority to pillage and assassination.¹ The unhappiness of those populations is enhanced by contrast with the felicity of their neighbours. It is futile to muse over the pleasant vision of creating new Indian states, under kings of Indian blood, who may receive the lessons of civilization from us. We cannot proselytise these princes to humanity. They will not embrace our ethics; we must recognise their

¹ Lord John Russell: *Memoirs of the Affairs of Europe*, i., 33. It is remarkable, that this reflective and philosophic work, to be valued for its substance, and to be admired for its style, is not more generally referred to, or more studiously read.

crimes. We may be gentle and caressing to them, but they will be *carnifices* to their people. We have dreamed too long over this idea. We have no moral authority to uphold them, and they have no claim to be upheld, for the prescriptive right to plunder and oppress any community is a vile and bloody fiction. The regeneration of such powers is impossible. It is time to relinquish the fancy. The more we delay, confiding in a better future, the further will the chance be driven. "The hope is on our horizon, and it flies as we proceed."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

REFLECTIONS ON THE BRITISH CONQUESTS.

FROM remote ages, the sources of philosophy, of faith, of art, and of the abstruser sciences, have been traced to the Oriental hemisphere. The general tendency of European progress is now towards the West, and "the vessel seems to float with its sails filled by the wind which blew of yore from Asia. England alone turns her prow to the East, as if to brave the world,"¹ whose stateliest capitals are built with their faces towards the setting sun. This is the account of a French historian, who predicts no limit to her career. An English writer points to the probable causes of her ruin—the demoralization and indolence of the army, the confusion of finance, an

¹ Michelet: History of France, vi., 322.

epicurean spirit in the rulers, a sudden ebullition among the people, allowing the chance of a universal conflagration in India, amid which our empire will go to wreck, like that of Rome:—¹

"Luxuria incubuit, victumque ulciscitur Indum."

It is right, when to a speculative mind remote chances of danger appear, to point them out, that legislation may perform its office of discerning and providing for the critical moment before it comes. The signs of dissolution, however, are still invisible. There is general peace, guarded by more than a quarter of a million of armed men. There is an annual market for twelve millions sterling worth of British manufactures. There is employment for mighty commercial fleets; a fine school for statesmen, and an enormous mass of empire, to secure British preponderance in the scale of European nations. The army will not be demoralized until our discipline is relaxed, and our wisdom utterly gone; nor will it be indolent, while a native state remains from Beluchistan to China, or between the Indus and Bokhara. Great Britain is mighty

¹ Mackenna : *Ancient and Modern India*, 487.

enough, indeed, to afford generosity; but the haughty and jealous King of Ava is a type of all the princes along that maritime tract. The finance, instead of disorganizing itself in the course of time, is annually more simply planned, and will probably be largely reformed. Epicureanism in the rulers has always existed; for men in India will compensate themselves, amid luxury and glitter, for the pain of living in a climate ungenial to them, and among races with whom they do not sympathise. This evil, however—if an evil it be—remains stationary, since the European population is in continual change. The same prediction was made by the enemies of Timur, when he invaded India. They said that in that warm climate the pride of Samarcand would degenerate into a race of Hindus.¹ When we perceive the symptoms of partial discontent, it will be time to trouble our minds about a general insurrection. These suggestions of danger, consequently, do not appear to open any formidable prospect.

There is undoubtedly, however, a great trust for the present generation to preserve for its suc-

¹ Gibbon, xii., 16.

cessors. More than political, the Hindus have to gain religious emancipation ; for craft on the one hand, and credulity on the other, are the vitiating influences of the East. Theirs is a soft and flexible nature; yet, until relieved from the great oppression of their minds, charity or law can produce little salutary change for them. But to be just to the races they govern, the people of this country must be informed of their wants. Sympathy is lost on an object we do not study. Until the close of last century, as Rousseau remarked, we knew little of India, because travellers went there to fill their purses and not their heads. This in a less, but still in a considerable degree, is true now; and it facilitates the operation of abuse. When men can govern in obscurity, they may govern by corruption.¹

It is, therefore, most important that a knowledge of those vast regions should become general among us, for ignorance is ineffectual to reform; and if the people of India are at any time oppressed, their sanctuary and tribunal of appeal

¹ If India be well governed, its rulers, and if ill governed, its friends, should be desirous of exposing its true state. "Darkness is propitious to cruelty, but it is likewise favourable to calumny and fiction."—Gibbon, vii., 72.

must be to the public opinion of England. That public opinion will become enlightened by independent inquiry for itself, not by recalling the sonorous tirades of orators in a former day, or errors repeated from historian to historian, until they have become traditional.

A recent critic of our Indian policy, in his strictures on the work of a French *philosophe*,¹ expresses his opinion that, while it is little probable that the Russians conquering India would carry there any benefits to the half barbarian princes and people of that region, it is doubtful whether they could acquire a more conspicuous infamy than the East India Company.² According to him, our conquests are usurpations, our negotiations are dishonourable intrigues, our habitual practice is to speculate on the fate and fortunes of the native races; while, if our administration has ameliorated the social state of the people, it is still a system of oppression—the iron gripe of unprincipled and tyrannical ambition. India is no longer the region of barbaric pomp; it will never again be the theatre of romance, or the fairy land of reverie. It is now

¹ Warren : *L'Inde Anglaise* en 1843.

² *Reveu des Deux Mondes* : v., 504.

a wasted and exhausted domain, on which we quarter the younger sons of our patrician houses. No class of the population gains by their presence; they have not continued the public works of the emperors, or restored the monuments of their magnificent pride, which time is bringing to decay. Our authority is based on fear. Russia may one day pass the desert where formerly her trains of artillery were overwhelmed by sand—and where, as the author of this hot philippic should remember, her squadrons melted away among the hills—to pour a host upon the plains of Afghanistan, and the British nation will expiate, in ruin and disgrace, the crimes of that policy which dares not appear without remorse and shame, naked in all its deformity before the world!

In a style like this is delivered a copious volume of sanctified frenzy, by the author of a new *Vindiciæ Gallicæ* for the razzias of Algeria. These ideas, in fact, are very popular in France. In some parts of Germany they are circulated as a favourite theme of disquisition; while in Holland, where our policy in the Indian archipelago excites the jealousy of merchants and the hatred of statesmen, a pleasant topic is afforded by the flagrant conduct and foreshadowed overthrow of

the British nation in India; for we receive lessons in humanity from writers whose pride is in an apology for the achievements of Vlaming and Valckenier, while we are criticised for our administration by those who unpeopled the Moluccas and made a wilderness in Java.¹ So easy is it to profane and pollute, by rhetorical art, the name of mercy, or to give to criminality the praise of heroism. In Russia it is a conventional fashion, among political amateurs, to declaim against the barbarities of the Government which prevented their own from presiding over new massacres of Ipsara and Chio. They invite the world to be familiar with the idea of their Czar's succession to our Indian sceptres; for he would be another Timur, planting his standards in fancy at Cairo and Constantinople, and plotting from Smyrna the subjugation of the Chinese Empire.² It is well for those to judge of public faith whose intrigues in Turkey and Persia have brought discredit on the very science of diplomacy. One spirit, however, animates them with

¹ "La Politique des Anglais, et leur systeme spoliateur."—See Temminck's *Coup d'Œil sur les Possessions Néerlandaises*, i., 159.

² Sherefeddin, v., 4.

the political critics who appeal to mankind against the battle of Meannee, while they exhaust the resources of laudatory art on the chivalric heroes of Dara.

France, however, to defend Algeria from the Algerians, has to maintain an army there more than a third as large as the whole military force of British India—a fifth-rate province of which is of superior extent and population. Russia has to exterminate or chain every people submitted to her sword. Holland utterly eradicated the native race from one of her possessions, while in all she has engaged in a long series of conflicts with them.¹ In our territories, few are the instances indeed where even a single tribe has rebelled, or even fretted against the yoke. I do not qualify these remarks, because I sincerely believe them to be true; but there is no blame to foreign critics if they condemn our policy. While states continue to flourish by rivalry, and to be animated by the spirit of emulation, and while one rises on the fall of another, this will infallibly be the tone of their criticism. It is for the judgment of the English people that the East

¹ See their own "Netherland's Indian Chronology," in the *Moniteur Oriental*, i., (5) 79.

India Company alone can frankly plead; and it is because many of them severely condemn our conduct, that this work has assumed the form of an apology or vindication.

I reverence that feeling in the British public, and in many writers, which encourages them to watch narrowly the conduct of their countrymen in Asia. No community is great which is not jealous of its reputation, and they are politically virtuous who have the courage and candour to accuse all who, by their acts, disparage the national character. They thus prove a desire to be the guardians of the public honour, as well as the protectors of a race which has lost, if indeed it ever possessed, the means of protecting itself. This is honourable to them, and fortunate for mankind, since doubtless many acts of corruption and encroachment have thus been prevented, and much of evil which still prevails, will be reformed.¹ A friend, however, need not be partial, or an enemy unjust. It is equally

¹ In "British India," by George Campbell (John Murray, 1842), we find a valuable statement of imperfection in our system, and though we may dispute some of Mr. Campbell's views, we cannot but admit the comprehensive and able character of his work. This is not the book alluded to in vol. i., chap. i.

vain on the one hand to exaggerate in an institution the vices it contains, as, on the other, to ascribe to it virtues it does not possess. There appears to me far more to admire than to condemn in the framework and administration of the East India Company, while its political history seems to be one of justifiable conquests—vindicated at once in their origin and in their results. History, therefore, cannot in sincerity lament the dissolution of the Mogul Empire, whose great capital, sacked by a Persian robber, and rifled by Mahrattas, is now among the neglected monuments of former times, possessed by “a company of Christian merchants, of a remote island in the northern ocean.”¹

¹ Gibbon, xii, 47.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE COMPANY'S CHARTER.

THE principles of commercial policy which now obtain, were unknown among us in the sixteenth century. Had they been known, it is probable they would not have applied. Epigrammatic maxims, striking in themselves, are seldom true, unless qualified by the acknowledgment of certain supposed conditions. Monopoly, for example, is hateful in itself, but when it is the only means of reviving enterprise or creating trade, it is good for the results it produces. Freedom of mercantile dealings, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, would probably have left the first intercourse of

England with India to be opened at a later day, when, perhaps, the great prizes of trade and influence had been secured by the more enterprising navigators of Portugal or Spain, to whose kings the arrogant authority of the Pope had apportioned all undiscovered and unclaimed territories in the world. Holland in her turn, at a more recent period, when she threatened to overwhelm her invaders by breaking down the barriers which defended her plains against the sea, might have fringed the shores of the East with commercial cities, while the English contented themselves with the limited enterprise of the Levant. Associated capital and combined energy could then alone, with any prospect of success, endeavour to break through the old bounds of commercial adventure, and explore the last confines of the earth to procure for this country a share in the long-desired riches of the East. This union of force, however, could only be induced to act by the concession to it of some superior privilege; and fairly so, for when men hazard their lives, their fortunes, and their vigour, in speculations for the future and general benefit of mankind, it is just that they

should be rewarded with a patent of profit, and that the first gains of the adventure should accrue to them.

Consequently, we can remember, with no regret, that the East India Company was in its origin a monopoly. Monopoly is now odious, because it restricts the operations of industry and the expansion of trade.¹ It was then popular, because it stimulated the one, and extended the other. Nations have found it equally futile to anticipate the progress of events, through the natural course of time, by arbitrary means, as to retreat in one age upon the institutions of another, and retrograde instead of advancing. The first charter was as completely in accordance with the spirit of the time in which it was sealed, as it would be inconsistent with the liberality, enterprise, and freedom of the present epoch. It was granted on the last day of the sixteenth century, renewed in 1609, and again renewed in 1635. Soon after this, the Civil Wars of England ending in the explosion of divine right, and the execution of Charles the

¹ "Ce mot, monopole, qui est devenu odieux, ne doit pas l'être toujours."—*Condillac, Commerce et Gouvernement*, 157.

First, infused into the nation a generous love of freedom in all the transactions of life—in politics, in industry, and in trade. Acting under the general impulse, Cromwell refused to tolerate, in any corporation of merchants, a prerogative over the enriching commerce of the East. He dissolved the Company, threw open the seas to private adventure, encouraged all to rivalry on that ocean on which he first made our navy the ascendant power, but was disappointed in the fruits of this free-trade policy. The school of the Tudors and the Stuarts was not calculated to enlighten the people, or animate to honourable enterprise. They were still the fickle multitude, which had been inspired to magnanimity by the stern and brilliant virtues of the Puritan fathers, but were even then preparing to kiss the hand of the second Charles, and light bonfires on Holborn, to rejoice over the treason of Monk.

Four years' experience showed that the energies of the nation were not sufficiently active, or its knowledge sufficiently mature to allow the commerce of India to depend on private adventurers. The Company was re-established with its original privileges, but its capital amounted to no

more than £740,000. The privileges and the capital were increased by the third charter in 1661 under Charles II., who, amid all his crimes and the excesses of his slothful luxury, was not averse from favouring the operations of commercial enterprise. Indeed, in the intervals of *ennui* which assailed him between the long periods when he was immersed and almost drowned in the pleasures of the senses, he could grant a patent of trade, as he could a patent of nobility whether to reward a pliant husband, or to indulge the favourite of a day's caprice. He had not the listless timidity of James I., and was easily persuaded of the benefits procured by the Company for his dominions. The factories in India were then placed under new regulations; the duties of the functionaries were defined with more precision, and in 1665 the trade was carried to the ports of China, where bigotry and barbarous pride have to this day restricted it within ridiculous limits.

Many new charters were applied for, and received by the East India Company—one in October, 1677; one in August, 1683; one in April, 1686; one in October, 1693; one in April, 1698. The facility with which these privileges were

obtained, and the indifference with which they were granted, arose probably from the general ignorance on Indian subjects which prevailed in this country. Few knew anything of the East; few, therefore, felt interest in commercial speculations there, while none, perhaps, cared to inquire what was the condition of the native communities already subjected to our rule. Indeed, the middle classes were then unaccustomed to take a share in public deliberations on subjects of that character. They were not, as now, jealous of every privilege, inquisitive as to the reason of every public grant, firm in their refusal to tolerate exclusive rights in any order of men—and their legislators had little disposition to encourage them. If the people had not then been ignorant, the Government would not have been safe. The East India Company, therefore, enjoyed its charter without much questioning, and that it escaped entire corruption is a remarkable and an honourable truth.

The successor, however, of the Jesuit King, James II., had possibly derived from his Dutch tutors considerable ideas of the importance of our East Indian possessions. In 1698, he incorporated a new Company, which commenced its

operations in a rivalry with the old one. Two pretenders to monopoly were now in the field together; but neither was disposed to allow the other a peaceful enjoyment of its divided privileges. The struggles which originated in this fancy of William III. to play one chartered association against another, were fierce and bitter, and carried on by means of those corrupt influences which the feudal constitution of an unreformed House of Commons rendered it so easy to apply. We have a curious subject for reflection in the extraordinary efforts made to secure boroughs for gentlemen in the interest of one Company or another. It became, indeed, from that time down to the trial of Warren Hastings, and much nearer our own day, a proverbial saying of notorious truth, that the rotten boroughs of Cornwall were the retiring berths prepared for old Indians. After amassing a fortune in the East, they came home, married a peer's daughter, went into Parliament, and fought there for the association by whose former bounty they had been enriched. Instead, however, of gaining advantages, the rival Companies only exhausted their resources, and injured each other. At length, in 1702, they were united, and their union

was consolidated by a deed in March, 1709. Parliament was applied to for an extension of the charter to 1733, which was granted, though when that term was near its expiration, petitions were presented against the monopoly. A new association offered to lend the Government money on a lighter ratio of interest, but the old Company proposing to contribute two hundred thousand sterling annually to the public service, obtained a prolongation of their exclusive privileges until 1766, with three years' notice to enable it to wind up its commercial affairs. At this time the attention of the country began to be attracted towards India. Speeches were made in the House; pamphlets were circulated; books were written, and controversies agitated, and by these means the public interest was to a considerable degree excited. The general tone, however, of all the opinions which found expression was decidedly favourable to the Company. Severe enemies it had indeed; but far less numerous than its friends, who continually derived new arguments from the increasing value of the Asiatic trade.

Courts of justice had early in the eighteenth century been established in India, but only

as appendages to our factory settlements. In 1756, however, a political career was commenced in Bengal, territorial dominion was obtained, and the functions of the Company now included not only commercial transactions, but civil administration. Already, indeed, the value of India was beginning to be known, and it was recognised as worth defending. The profits of trade there had hitherto been estimated at two millions sterling a-year, on a standing capital of six millions, in six thousand shares of one thousand pounds each. The profits increasing from twelve to fifteen per cent., the price of stock also rose until it doubled; so that the capital invested in the East Indian trade was in reality estimated at twelve millions.

In 1769, public feeling was strongly expressed against the immense revenues derived by the holders of Indian stock from their privileges of trade in the East, and an Act was procured, prohibiting a dividend of profits to the amount of more than ten per cent. on the original capital subscribed. It was declared that all excess of income should be appropriated to furnish resources for a reserve fund, or to the carrying out of improvements in our Indian possessions.

Nevertheless, each share maintained its value of two thousand pounds; and with extremely little variation, has continued so to the present day. Previously to this settlement of the dividend, the Company engaged to make an annual payment to the public exchequer of Great Britain of four hundred thousand pounds sterling. This flowing of a surplus into the coffers of the State continued, however, only until 1773, when the financial system of the East India House, oppressed by many demands, confused by the multiplied claims of an increasing expenditure, necessitated by increasing dominions of which the profitable reflux had not yet begun, solicited a loan, which was voted by the House of Commons, to the amount of fourteen hundred thousand pounds. The finances of the association relieved in this manner, again became buoyant, and within seven years the whole sum was repaid into the public treasury.

In the year 1733, also, the charter was again renewed. Its principles were, that the Company should exercise sovereign authority over its acquisitions on the Asiatic continent; should continue to enjoy its patent of trade with India, in addition to that of the open ports of China, which produced about a million sterling of profit every

year, though that of the peninsula was frequently conducted at a loss. Warren Hastings, by the exercise of that watchful and industrious fiscal genius which was the conspicuous characteristic of his mind, and was seldom embarrassed by considerations of a purely ethical nature, prevented the Company's speculations from ending in a disastrous issue, and reaped from India treasures to enrich the mercantile community of England. This association was then the single importer of tea into these islands, and that commodity was long sold at a rate similar to that which the Dutch procured for their spices in Holland and other parts of Europe. There is a memorable event in general history connected with the progress of the tea trade. At a period when the colonies of North America, agitated by the tyrannical acts of the British Government, were fretting and murmuring in discontent and audible sedition, there was in the British market a superfluity of that production—once a luxury, then a grateful comfort, and now a necessary of life—and some of it was exported to Boston and Charleston. But in that improvident spirit of obstinacy which an infatuated government displays before it brings upon itself the Nemesis of rebel-

lion, the Ministry laid a tax on the tea carried by the East India Company to America, and those flames broke out which scattered over half a continent the blood of a kindred and conflicting race.

The period of the American war, and the great battle in England over the ancient privileges of the East India Company, derive another historical connection from the conspicuous eminence which Edmund Burke filled in both of them. On the one hand, he cried out for a policy which might have continued England the acknowledged imperial ruler of the Western Continent; on the other, he exclaimed for a condemnation of the British policy in the East, which might have interrupted our progress there, and perpetuated the imbecile despotisms which he dignified as injured powers deserving the sympathy and support of this nation. His efforts in both failed, but in neither were they fruitless. With regard to America, he left a treasury of maxims, invaluable for their wisdom; with regard to India, he awakened public attention, and Pitt's Bill of 1784, imperfect as it was, derived much of its importance from his solicitude for the welfare of the Indian people and the reputation of the British Govern-

ment. By that bill, which passed in 1784, a Board of Control was established, which connected the Company with the Parliament by an intermediary of excellent construction. Its first President was Mr. Dundas, afterwards Lord Melville, and the office has been since filled, among others, by the Viscount Castlereagh, George Tierney, Thomas Grenville, Earl Harrowby, Mr. Canning, Lord Ellenborough, the Earl of Ripon, and Sir John Cam Hobhouse, now Lord Broughton, whose comprehensive knowledge of Indian affairs pointed him out for the honourable eminence on which he was placed. Mr. Fox Maule was named in 1852, but enjoyed the office only a few weeks, which deprived the country of his abilities in the construction of a new East India Bill; and on the accession of the Earl of Derby to power, Mr. Herries undertook the Presidency of the Board of Control.

Though this new influence was created to increase the responsibility of the East India Company to the supreme Legislature of the country, the principles of the charter remained unchanged, but the trade with India and China increased at a marvellous rate; fleet upon fleet left our shores for those ports, and the riches of

the East, in prodigal bounty, were poured into the coffers of the merchant governors who had succeeded to the paramount throne of Asia. A calculation was made to show that the revenues of that association, within seventeen years, amounted in the aggregate to a hundred and eighty-five millions sterling—more than ten millions annually. At this time the country was awakening to a sense of the unequalled importance of this trade; it understood why the merchants of primitive times had preceded the apostles of religion in search of Indian commodities;¹ why Spain and Venice, Portugal and Holland, had used their arms and lavished their blood, to secure the prize of Oriental commerce—a dream of wealth from the most ancient times—which had built the palaces, and endowed the princes of the Mistress of the Adriatic Sea. They now knew whence had come the golden roofs of Seville, and the ornaments in the fretted arcades of the Alhambra; how, from the swamps of the Batavian Sea had arisen the Exchange of Amsterdam and the schools of Leyden; why Manilla had gained in Insular Asia the reputation of

¹ See Cosmas, iii., 178, 179; xi., 337.

being built with solid blocks of gold, and why the Council in Leadenhall Street considered it no improvident profusion to expend great treasures in securing representatives of their cause in the Imperial Court of Parliament. Petitions were multiplied from the principal seats of commercial and manufacturing industry throughout the kingdom, setting forth that the privileges of the East India Company were injurious to the general interests of trade; but the pressure was not effectual; the managers of the Company procured a renewal of the charter for twenty years; the offices of the Board of Control were to be supported by the exchequer of Leadenhall Street; and a private trade, to the extent of three thousand tons a-year, was granted, under the superintendence of the Company. Still the ferment of public opinion continued to operate, until in 1808 a Select Committee of the Commons' House of Parliament was appointed to investigate the general affairs of British India. They protracted their labours during four successive sessions, and presented four voluminous reports, as the result of the inquiry which they had conducted.

In the fifth year, the agitation against the privileges of the Company rose almost to a

tumult. The great engines of public opinion were set in motion, and the principle of monopoly was emphatically condemned. Large and lucrative markets on the Continent had been closed by the sanguinary and ferocious ambition of Napoleon; new channels of commercial enterprise were desired, and the nation claimed the exercise of its right to share in the advantages of trade with India. Nothing less was announced as satisfactory than unqualified liberty of exporting and importing, between India and England, the produce and fabrics of both countries. The Court of Directors at length yielded their assent, on the condition, however, that all freights from their Eastern possessions should be sold at their sales in London. The next concession obtained from them was the free resort, under certain restrictions, of Europeans to India; the interests of the English Church were provided for; the authority of the Company was abridged; its privileges were reduced, and the principle of their new charter, granted in 1833, was that they governed their acquisitions in Asia simply as a trust from the Imperial country. The resistance to these innovations was strong, protracted, and fiery; but unsuccessful. Now, however, it

appears to be the general conviction that the time for monopoly was passed; that the Company had enjoyed its exclusive privileges as long as it was right to enjoy them, and that the welfare of India, as well as the interest of Great Britain, was promoted by the revolution of affairs which at that period took place.

When, nevertheless, the East India Company had been changed from a sovereign authority disposing of a great empire at its own will, and enjoying the trade of an empire for its own advantages, to the powerful and beneficent organ for governing our Asiatic possessions, the hostility of its opponents was not subdued. When the discussion of a new charter was raised in 1830, proposals were made for organized inquiries into the constitution of the government, the condition of the people, the administration of the law, the state of the finances, and the commercial interests involved. Political events in England, however, prolonged the consideration of the question until 1832, when it was renewed. The simple points of inquiry were, "Is the Company's exclusive trade with China to be preserved, and how shall the Government of India in future be carried on?" The monopoly of the China trade was, without

much controversy, surrendered, for public opinion unequivocally declared against it. How Indian government should be administered, was a question not so easily to be discussed; for the ignorance of the country on the state, institutions, laws, history, habits, manners, opinions and prejudices of the native race was then almost complete. Many cried out for the abolition of the Company, but few would undertake to suggest any institution to wield authority in its place. Nor amid the fire and excitement of a universal movement for political reform, was the information likely to be obtained; still it was impossible to renew the charter without obtaining new concessions for the nation, and a compromise was effected. The Company surrendered to the Imperial Government its territories with assets and claims of every description, in consideration of an equivalent payment by the Legislature, and an acknowledgment by the Imperial Treasury of all the Company's obligations.

When the conditions had been proposed and accepted, the East India Company was chartered to administer for twenty years the government of our possessions on the Asiatic continent. The charter was passed into law on the twenty-eighth

of August, 1833, and is entitled "3 and 4 William IV., Cap. 85. An Act for effecting an arrangement with the East India Company for the better Government of His Majesty's Indian Territories, till the 30th day of April, 1854."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ACTUAL CONSTITUTION OF THE COMPANY.

THE capital of the East India Company represented by stock is divided among about eighteen hundred "Proprietors." These enjoy among them the two thousand five hundred votes for which that property confers the qualification, and perhaps a sixth of the votes are held by natives. There are numerous Proprietors of the Jewish persuasion, with a great number of ladies. Formerly, in selecting the Directors, this electoral body exercised a direct supreme power over our Eastern possessions. By the law of 1833, however, this old basis of the whole structure was removed, and the Court of Proprietors ceased to have either recognised interest or direct influence in the affairs of India. The Company

was deprived of all its commercial property, of its right to trade, and of its independent authority. The standing capital of six millions sterling was made a primary charge on the revenues of our Asiatic territories, and a fund of two millions was disposed so that it might accumulate in order, under particular conditions, to purchase when necessary the whole amount of stock. Thus the country provided itself with the means not only of destroying the Company as a political machine, but of extinguishing the ancient foundation of its existence, and sinking that capital on which so many great negotiations had been established.

The law of 1833, however, though it fixed the date of twenty years for the chartered existence of the Company, obviously contemplated its duration for a period of at least double that time. The Proprietors, should the political rights of their representatives in Leadenhall Street be taken away in 1854, are entitled to demand the re-payment of their capital at the rate of two hundred pounds sterling for every hundred pounds of stock, and that this settlement shall be effected within three years. However, as East Indian Stock is now valued at a

premium of a hundred and sixty pounds on every hundred originally subscribed, it is not to be imagined that the claim would be made; for it would be to the interest of the Proprietors to refrain from preferring it. The Crown, on the other hand, has not the power to insist on such an arrangement being effected, until forty years after the passing of the Act of 1833—that is, until April, 1874. If the country should now agree to continue the Company's privileges to that period, it may then require the Proprietors to sell their stock, at one year's notice, to the Crown, at the rate of two hundred pounds sterling for every hundred pounds originally subscribed. The two millions set apart twenty years ago, have now accumulated to nearly three millions nine hundred thousand, and by April, 1874, will have swelled to a large amount, which will sink so much of the Company's capital, without any charge upon the revenue. Thus, in a financial point of view, a great gain will be derived by the country from the continuance to the East India Company of its political rights for another period of twenty years.

Thus, as the Government has no power to extinguish the stock until April, 1874, it is evident

that the last Act contemplated a continuance to this association of its political existence until that date, though undoubtedly it also looked for an examination and reform of its administrative principles in 1854. It would be an anomaly indeed for a body of Proprietors to exist after the Company had been extinguished; for a prescriptive right attaches to their stock, which will not willingly be yielded. It is true that they have now little more to do than to receive their dividends of ten and a half per cent., and to elect the members of the Court of Directors; but in this lies a great weight of power. To choose the Directors is indirectly to influence the patronage, which is the essential authority for which the Company and its opponents contend. Their other functions consist merely in meeting and discussing affairs; but their unanimous vote need not directly control one point of policy in the whole legislation of India. All, indeed, they can absolutely do is, to veto the gratuities, to the amount of six hundred pounds a-year, which are at the disposal of the Court of Directors. This is a singular body, with curious functions; but there are three important reasons for maintaining it:—the admirable results, the

extreme danger of change, and the certainty that an inferior system would replace it.

The Court of Directors consists of twenty-four members. They are elected by the Proprietors from their own body, but are disqualified unless they possess a certain amount of stock, or if they are already Directors of the Bank of England or the South Sea House. Generally they are men of capacious minds, intimately acquainted with India, earnestly solicitous of promoting its welfare, and qualified by all the attributes of distinguished ability for the deliberations they have to conduct. Speaking of them as a body, we can nowhere find in the world twenty-four men more uniformly armed with the resources of knowledge and statesmanship than the gentlemen round the East India Council table; and it is one among the legitimate sources of pride to the Company, that it can supply so constantly a set of politicians like these. Six of the body retire every four years, but as they are generally chosen again, the Court of Directors may be described as elected for life.

The Court of Directors is divided into three Committees; a Finance Committee, a Political and Legislative Committee, and a Home and Judicial

Committee; one with seven, the other two with eight members each, and these with a chairman and deputy-chairman form the whole deliberative body. Nominally and actually, they enjoy the privilege of filling up most of the offices in the civil service of India. There are, however, some exceptions to this privilege; for the Governor-General, the Judges, and the Bishops, are appointed by the Crown, while others are yielded to the President of the Board of Control. For all appointments, however, the Directors must procure the concurrence of the Imperial Government; but the real formidable authority which they possess—an authority which is a safeguard to the purity of Indian administration—is that of recalling, without consulting the Ministry, every public servant in India, from the most subordinate clerk to the Governor-General. The Crown has the same privilege also; neither appoints, unless in concert with the other, but both can independently dismiss a functionary. The curious balance of their several powers appears an arrangement admirably calculated to prevent corruption, and has in more than one instance spared the empire from disgrace and

loss; but generally, a remarkable harmony of action is preserved.

As the Court of Proprietors, however, cannot, even by a unanimous vote, issue a single order, so the Court of Directors cannot forward a single despatch, or forbid one from being sent, without the consent of the President of the Board of Control. If the President sends to the Court a despatch, and they refuse to act on the subject, he may within a fortnight compel them to transmit it, unless, indeed, in a case scarcely to be imagined, when his will is in opposition to the law, when the Directors may appeal for judgment to the Court of Queen's Bench. Then, if the Court frames a despatch with certain remarks and instructions, it must be submitted to the Board of Control, and if the President choose, he may modify, reverse, or cancel the whole, and send out another on a totally different course of policy. Thus, he is in fact the medium of the whole ministerial authority with respect to the administration of British India.

The Board of Control consists of a President and two Secretaries, sitting in Parliament. In addition to this, there is independently of all the

others, a secret Committee, consisting of the Chairman, Deputy-Chairman, and senior members of the Court of Directors. They practically administer all political affairs connected with negotiation with the native princes, as well as other transactions required to be kept in secret; but all their proceedings must be in conjunction with the President of the Board of Control.

Such is the East India Company as it exists. The question of continuing its existing privileges or dissolving it altogether, is now included among the prominent objects of public attention. It is, indeed, a strange engine of government—for a government it still is, though the title is sometimes disputed, since it can control the choice of governors; and they who select the men who administer, determine the character of the administration. It is extraordinary in its design, singular in its conduct; but one which we should correct in order to conserve, and not attack in order to destroy. If it admit corruption, eradicate that evil; but wherever immense patronage is vested, abuses will insinuate themselves, and a Cabinet is not more impregnable against undue influences than a Court of Directors. Vicious

practices, too, may be foreign and excrescent, and not inherent in a system.

If its irresponsibility be imperfect—which is scarcely possible, since it is answerable for every despatch and every instruction—let it be placed under more control. If its duties are slowly performed, quicken them by the steady, continuous, and irresistible pressure of public opinion. Reform in the spirit of reform, which is the true office of legislation; but hesitate for the sake of a general theory to destroy an organized and balanced machine which has afforded peace and security to a hundred millions of people in Asia.

That the Company will be extinguished is, however, a probability so remote, that it requires no discussion. Unity in the plan of governing an empire is an attractive theory, and the principle of a machine like this is anomalous; but the English people is least of all flattered by the pictures of speculative and experimental politicians. The structure presents antiquity without decay, and has not yet survived its use. Whether it comprehends or faithfully guards all the momentous interests of humanity and policy which are committed to its care, is a question open to con-

troversy. Whether, however, the popular legislature is now so far educated to an acquaintance with the history, the religion and laws, manners, resources, industry, trade, arts, castes, classes, opinions, prejudices, traditions, local feelings, actual condition, or wants of India, seems to admit of little doubt. Such knowledge is still peculiar to a few. The technicalities of the most abstruse sciences are not more unintelligible to the general body of persons in this country, than the very names of Zillah and Sudder Courts. Some, who possess this information in a greater or less degree, desire Parliament to adopt the whole legislative control of India, because they imagine every Member is equally well instructed with themselves; but from 1834 to 1852, small change in this respect is observable. Whenever Asiatic topics were then introduced, they were listened to impatiently, treated with indifference, and eagerly dismissed.¹ Such subjects are not only uninteresting, but obnoxious, to the general body of the House. This feeling is no more than natural in that senate. It is the prevailing tone

¹ In the last debate in the Commons (May, 1852) scarcely forty Members would remain to hear the subject discussed.

of the country, which is undoubtedly very ill acquainted with the social and political state of the East.

Consequently, nothing can be more dangerous than to trust to Parliament alone for a watchful and wise administration of the details of Indian affairs. It may, and generally does, decide justly in great controversies on imperial policy; but if ever the minute and subordinate points are forced on the daily and continual attention of Parliament, it will assuredly resign their settlement into the hands of the ascendant statesman of the day.¹ It would give him, what a Prime Minister has himself described as a dangerous and unconstitutional amount of power, a power which should excite the jealousy of all in this nation who are attached to our institutions.² That Minister, without a corrupt sentiment in his breast, or a corrupt practice in his own scheme of action, will assuredly, under the conditions of his political existence, employ the power and patronage thus confided to his will in obtaining the command of parliamentary supremacy. The

¹ Wilson, ix., 563.

² Earl of Derby: Speech, April 2, 1852.

necessity of the double government, indeed, is admitted by a statesman who, though we may condemn his acts as Governor-General, watches with earnest solicitude, and discusses with perfect knowledge the affairs of India, from his seat in the House of Peers.¹ Some influential and independent body, as Professor Wilson most justly remarks, it will always be wise to maintain between the Cabinet councils and the Asiatic dominions of Great Britain.

When this great question is raised among those whose deliberations will be conclusive, the welfare of India can only be promoted by an investigation conducted in a spirit of the most judicial impartiality. The subject is not one for vehement and untempered accusation on the one hand, or for florid and unqualified eulogy on the other. "Passion and ignorance," said a great writer, "are always despotic,"² and if these constitute the spirit of the East India reform, it will secure no honour for the imperial, or blessing for the dependent, race. The institution has to be tried by the test of its own achievements

¹ Earl of Ellenborough, April 2, 1852.

² Gibbon: *Decline and Fall*, xii., 263.

and the circumstances which have influenced its career. To have discussed to any useful purpose the political history of the Company, and to have suggested any correct ideas of its results, will be sufficient satisfaction to me; and I may once more be permitted to say that, perceiving the necessity of reform in the administrative policy of that association, I sincerely believe that the more distinctly its character and conduct are described, the more honourable will they appear to this and to every succeeding age.

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